

Gender Agreement Patterns in Heritage Russian

Dissertation

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. Phil.)

eingereicht an der Sprach- und literaturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät
der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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Datum der Verteidigung: 15.07.2021

I dedicate this thesis to my children

Acknowledgements.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the people, who supported and motivated me throughout my research.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the writing of my Doctoral Thesis. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Artemis Alexiadou, who inspired me to work on such a puzzling and innovative topic as heritage languages, where I could use not only my knowledge of theoretical linguistics, but also the knowledge of my three favourite languages, namely Russian, German and English. Moreover, it was because of Prof. Alexiadou introducing me to the topic of gender through the prism of heritage language acquisition, that I became convinced of the necessity to do more research into it. Apart from that, I am grateful to her as my supervisor for her guidance and readiness to help on the occasions I had questions concerning my study.

I also sincerely appreciate the support and supervision given by Prof. Dr. Natalia Gagarina. Her feedback has been most important and informative. What is more, her assistance served as a powerful stimulus to the further investigation of heritage Russian grammar.

Furthermore, I want to thank everyone involved in the PhD examination process. I wish to especially thank the doctoral committee and the doctoral admissions board.

Next, I feel grateful to my participants for taking part in my experiment and for their helpfulness and diligence in doing the test. First and foremost, I would like to thank those parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church, who participated in my test and who helped me to find other participants. Beside that I would like to thank the members of the theatre group "Bridge" ("Brücke") and the parents and pedagogues of the kindergarten "Fairy-tale world" ("Märchenwelt") in Stuttgart for their participation and for their help in my search for subjects for the experiment. Unfortunately, I cannot name all these people, because of the anonymity of my experiment.

Moreover, I am very thankful to my family and friends for their moral support and inspiration. I want to express special thanks to my grandmother and brother for their prayers and to a good friend Kevin Michael Shaw for his patience in guiding me as my English teacher.

Finally, I am grateful to my dear husband, Yves, for his moral support and his help with the technical aspects of this paper, and to my little children, who are the future Russian heritage speakers in Germany, for giving me the motivation to work on the present topic.

Abstract.

Bilingualism and multilingualism have become an important part of modern life. As a result, more and more questions as to the main principles of multilingual language acquisition are arising in linguistic theory. In this dissertation, I raise the issue of the grammatical gender in Russian as a heritage language. As is known from previous studies, conducted in the USA and in Norway, gender undergoes restructuring in heritage Russian. Similarly, I investigate gender restructuring in heritage Russian in Germany. In particular, this thesis aims to determine the major principles of use of gender agreement patterns with the four classes of exceptional nouns (hybrids referring to females, common gender nouns, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*) in the heritage Russian language.

For this purpose, I have conducted an experimental study on gender agreement, which consists of two big tasks, a translation task and a multiple-choice task. In all the tasks presented in the test, the exceptional nouns under consideration are included in a way that gender is predetermined in order to cause a form-meaning conflict. I have worked with three groups of Russian native speakers: Russian heritage speakers (advanced and intermediate-to-advanced speakers), Russian first generation immigrants (baseline speakers) and monolingual Russian native speakers (control group of speakers).

A detailed analysis of the results of the study has led to the following conclusions. Advanced heritage speakers are able to achieve the target-like language proficiency in gender agreement in transparent contexts and in some situations of form-meaning mismatch. The use of agreement patterns strongly depends on the speakers' language proficiency. Less proficient speakers tend to have more problems with referential nouns. More than that, they use more formal agreement patterns and less mixed agreement patterns in the contexts described in this thesis.

Importantly, this dissertation provides evidence for the importance of variability for successful heritage language acquisition. Variability of grammatical structures leads to inconsistency of input which makes it harder for heritage speakers to acquire these structures and leads to incomplete acquisition. As a result, heritage speakers fail to acquire the generic component of the semantic structure of hybrid nouns. This in turn results in the divergence in the use of agreement patterns by monolingual and bilingual speakers with the exceptional nouns, which allow variability (hybrids, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*). This divergence is realised without overt errors and represents an example of covert language restructuring.

However, the situation is different with nouns which can only be used with one gender agreement pattern (common gender nouns, male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja*). Heritage speakers use them on a par with monolinguals.

Apart from that, the thesis touches upon the question of the development of standard Russian and provides evidence for the increase of analytic features in the Russian language.

All in all, the main concern of this thesis is the assertion that advanced heritage speakers can achieve target-like language proficiency. However, as the results of my experimental study show, inconsistent input in the situations of greater optionality leads to incomplete heritage language acquisition and to covert restructuring of heritage Russian.

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Chapter 1. Introduction.

1.1. Importance and Main Issues of the Study.

We are living in times of globalisation and digitalisation. These phenomena are both advantageous and challenging for the world's population. Much scientific effort is needed to take up the challenge. This thesis represents a modest contribution to the research on how and why the above mentioned processes influence our lives. My study concentrates on such an important feature of globalisation as multilingualism. The number of questions on bi- and multilingualism as well as the number of answers given by scholars to these questions is infinite. Each of these answers provides new information, which is important for a better understanding of current changes and for choosing the most successful ways for the world's further development.

In my thesis, I focus my attention on the category of gender. Corbett (1991) calls gender the “most puzzling of the grammatical categories” for good reason (p. 1). The presence of gender in a particular language and the peculiarities of its assignment and agreement vary greatly among languages and fascinate scholars all around the world. It goes without saying that such a language as Russian, which has a well-defined gender category, is especially interesting for linguists.

I would like to highlight the intriguing topic of grammatical gender, comparing its use in different varieties of Russian as a native language. I deal with three groups of Russian native speakers: Russian monolinguals (a *control group* of speakers), Russian first generation immigrants to Germany, heritage speakers of Russian in Germany (Russian second generation immigrants). In this thesis I will refer to immigrants who came to Germany in adulthood as *Russian first generation immigrants* or *first generation speakers of Russian*. Sometimes, I will refer to them as *baseline speakers*, which is a common term for these speakers in linguistic theory. By contrast, immigrants who were born in Germany or came to Germany in early childhood will be called *Russian heritage speakers*.

Heritage speakers represent a diverse group of migrants who have two (or more) native languages. One of these languages, mostly the majority language of the country they live in, dominates. Due to restricted language exposure and some other factors (language input, speakers' motivation, similarities of native languages), the heritage speakers' first

language becomes their secondary and their second language becomes their primary. Many linguists agree that heritage speakers is a group of speakers which is situated between second language learners and monolinguals. It means that they can achieve a better language proficiency than the second language learners, but they underperform if compared to monolingual speakers. However, some heritage speakers achieve the level of balanced bilinguals, that is they master both majority and heritage languages equally well. The factors which play a decisive role in such a successful language acquisition are heatedly debated.

On the whole, much is known about heritage languages, but there is still much to investigate. The research on heritage languages would be helpful not only for linguists and psycholinguists, but also for language teachers and the speakers themselves. Surely, heritage speakers can shade new light on the understanding of the nativeness of language, on the peculiarities of language acquisition, on the limitations and on the possibilities of language competence for linguistic theory.

It is not a surprise that in spite of numerous research activities, gender remains a fertile soil for future investigations. Definitely, linguistic information obtained from heritage speakers can greatly change our vision of gender and its variability. For example, the studies of American scholars on gender in Russian have demonstrated that low level heritage speakers lose the three gender system, whereas high proficiency heritage speakers preserve the three gender system, although this system has some differences if compared with baseline Russian (cf. Polinsky, 2008). Thus, gender undergoes restructuring in heritage Russian in the USA. The number of questions is growing as to the reasons and peculiarities of such a restructuring as well as those about interrelations between the processes of language acquisition, language contact, language change and language loss.

This research is going to fill some of the gaps in language theory and to provide arguments to some of the above mentioned issues. One of the main questions of linguistic theory dealing with heritage languages is the dilemma of the nativeness of heritage languages. It would be interesting to know if advanced heritage speakers can achieve monolingual proficiency. To answer this question, I conducted a study on gender agreement and tested advanced heritage speakers of Russian. More than that, I worked with adult participants, whose grammar has been fully acquired. I compared the results of these speakers to the results of monolingual speakers and to the results of the first generation speakers, that is to say the parents and teachers of the tested heritage speakers.

The participant Russian heritage speakers live in Germany. As already understood, most of the research on gender in heritage Russian has been conducted in the USA. So, the investigation of Russian-German bilinguals and their comparison to Russian-English bilinguals is of special interest for linguistic research.

Several significant studies on gender in heritage Russian have been conducted in Norway. The Norwegian gender system is closer to Russian and it will be interesting to consider the investigations of Norwegian scholars and to compare their results to mine.

Similar to Norwegian, but in contrast to English, German is a language with a well-defined gender system. As in Russian, it differentiates between three genders: feminine, masculine and neuter. However, the German gender system differs from that of Russian in several ways. For example, Russian gender requires less effort in acquisition if compared to German gender. The reason is that German has many more words with “unmotivated” gender, which cannot be decoded on the basis of the meaning or form of a noun (Dieser, 2009, p. 1). However, gender agreement in Russian seems to be more complex than in German, because it involves not only adjectival agreement as is the case in German, but also agreement with the verb. Moreover, German gender agreement is purely morphological, whereas in Russian both semantic and morphological agreement are possible.

According to previous research, heritage speakers do not show much difficulty with gender assignment and gender agreement with nouns in transparent contexts. Yet, difficulties are observed in exceptional cases, such as conflict agreement situations and cases of gender underspecification. Most of these difficulties are observed with such noun classes as hybrids, common gender nouns, male names ending in *-a/ -ja* and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. Accordingly, I chose these exceptional noun classes for my research. As some of these classes allow different agreement patterns, it will be interesting to see if heritage speakers and monolinguals show similar language behaviour in these cases.

The nouns which I chose for my research are animate nouns. I am not going to deal with inanimate nouns in this thesis. Therefore, I will not focus on neuter gender assignment and neuter gender agreement.

Russian gender agreement is unique. If we speak about animate nouns, it allows not only feminine and masculine gender agreement patterns, but also mixed agreement patterns, an exciting phenomenon, which has not been investigated much and has become very interesting for scholars in the last decades. Mixed agreement represents a combination of masculine and feminine agreement within one pattern. This phenomenon is rather new in Russian and therefore it remains a subject of constant change. Mixed agreement has been

developing from its complete rejection in the beginning of the twentieth century to acceptance in colloquial speech at the end of the twentieth century and to the preference of semantic agreement instead of the more complicated mixed agreement in the twenty-first century. This development is very interesting not only with regard to the language of Russian monolinguals, but also with regard to heritage speakers.

Indeed, mixed agreement takes place in irregular, non-transparent patterns and involves non-canonical gender use. That is why it presents an uneasy challenge for heritage speakers, whose language acquisition was interrupted by the acquisition of another language. The comparison of language behaviour of Russian monolingual speakers and Russian heritage speakers can be helpful for the explanation of the mechanisms of gender agreement in general, but first and foremost for the explanation of the mechanisms of mixed agreement. Furthermore, limits and possibilities of heritage speakers' grammar can be analysed and both external and internal factors that influence heritage grammars can be better evaluated.

The fact that some Russian nouns, which are going to be tested in this study, allow several grammatically correct agreement patterns, enables the comparison of both erroneous and error-free gender use of monolingual and bilingual Russian speakers. In her doctoral thesis, Laleko (2010) warns of neglecting the data which heritage speakers produce correctly. She suggests using a different strategy to express grammatical phenomena, because "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" (Laleko, 2010, p. 39). Truly, error-free language divergence in heritage language has not been investigated much. Laleko (2010) suggests the term "overt" and "covert" language restructuring to refer to erroneous and error-free language divergence between heritage language and baseline language (p. 39). I adopt this term in my thesis.

Thus, the central topic of this thesis is gender agreement in heritage Russian. Different linguists use different terms referring to gender agreement patterns. The most popular terms are given by Corbett (2003), who differentiates between semantic agreement, that is gender agreement determined by the meaning of a noun, and syntactic agreement, that is gender agreement determined by the morphological form of a noun (p. 114). Moreover, for the purposes of this work, it is also important to differentiate referential gender agreement, which is common for nouns without an inherent semantic meaning and which depends on a referent in discourse (Dahl, 2000; Rodina, 2008, p. 10; Montschenkacher, 2010, p. 67). Referential gender agreement will be especially interesting during the discussion of common gender nouns and hybrids.

In order to examine the use of gender agreement by bilinguals, I tested heritage speakers' preferences as to gender agreement patterns with exceptional noun classes in the situations of form-meaning mismatch (male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, common gender nouns referring to males, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, hybrid nouns referring to females). Following Corbett's (1982) idea that "the problem of these nouns lie in syntax rather than in assignment", I pay more attention to speakers' strategies in choosing gender agreement, rather than to mechanisms of gender assignment (p. 198). Although, one should admit that the two processes go hand in hand.

1.2. Main Focus of the Study and its Novelty.

Thus, the research is particularly focused on the agreement patterns in the situations of form-meaning conflict, namely in the situations where the meaning of a noun cannot be derived from its form. This dissertation aims to present an experimental study on agreement patterns in Russian and to provide a detailed analysis of this study. The analysis is based on the comparison of the use of gender agreement patterns by monolingual and bilingual speakers. Moreover, the comparison of the results of my experiment with the results of previous studies helps to ascertain the universal principles of the use of gender agreement.

To be precise, I raise the following issues in this study.

Firstly, I raise the question of whether advanced heritage speakers have problems with the agreement patterns under consideration. Interestingly, the results of my study confirm the well-known phenomenon of diversity of heritage speakers. Both proficient participants and those, who have difficulties in gender agreement, have taken part in this study. As a result, I have differentiated two important items. As for the highly proficient heritage speakers, I have developed the idea that heritage speakers are able to reach the target-like level in the Russian language. However, there are exceptions. As for the less proficient speakers, I will show that they have difficulties in the use of the exceptional nouns. However, these difficulties are not realised in overt errors. Following Laleko (2010), I will show that both groups of participants demonstrate the process of covert restructuring of the Russian language, although to different degrees.

The results of the subjects of my study indicate that it is the variety of gender agreement patterns, which cause the difficulties for heritage speakers. Following Rodina (2008), I have subdivided the exceptional nouns into two big groups. The first group consists of the exceptional nouns, which usually do not allow numerous agreement patterns. These

are common gender nouns, male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. I will refer to them as *nouns in obligatory contexts*. The second group consists of the exceptional nouns, which can be used with different agreement patterns. These are female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrids referring to females. I will refer to them as *nouns in variable contexts*.

Interestingly enough, the first group of nouns is used target-like almost by all the participant groups. Conversely, nouns in variable contexts represent a challenge even for advanced heritage speakers. More than that, this variability is problematic not only in bilingual, but also in monolingual language acquisition.

Additionally, I will show that the acquisition of the nouns, which can have different agreement patterns, remains incomplete in heritage Russian. In particular, I argue that adult heritage speakers miss the generic component of the semantic structure of hybrid nouns. This fact results in the divergence in the use of agreement patterns by monolingual and bilingual speakers.

Another important issue which I analyse in this dissertation is the use of mixed agreement patterns. As is known, the study of Polinsky (2008) shows that Russian low-level heritage speakers in the USA have serious problems in gender assignment and gender agreement. Some of them have lost declension classes in their grammar and have restructured the category of gender, making it much simpler. I do not doubt that such speakers will not use mixed agreement patterns in their Russian language, because of their complexity. That is why I tested advanced heritage speakers, who are acquainted with mixed agreement and with the exceptional nouns described in this work.

As I will describe later, the results of my study prove that mixed agreement is present in the grammars of advanced heritage speakers, despite its difficulty. However, I observe important differences in the use of mixed agreement of heritage speakers if compared to Russian monolingual native speakers and to the first generation immigrants. Interestingly enough, most of these differences have nothing to do with ungrammaticality and represent the so-called covert grammar restructuring, that is the “reorganization” of grammar, which is not evident from overt errors (Laleko, 2010, p. ii). In case of advanced speakers, covert restructuring of language is of special interest. Really, their language production is almost error-free, so that it seems that heritage language is identical to target language from first sight. However, on closer inspection, it appears to be different.

The main reason for the divergence in heritage Russian lies in the above-mentioned incomplete acquisition of hybrids and in the difficulties caused by the greater optionality of agreement patterns.

Moreover, the data presented in this study displays that heritage speakers differ from monolingual Russian native speakers in their frequency of use of hybrids. In particular, heritage speakers show the tendency to avoid hybrids, whenever possible, which is not the case with monolinguals.

Interestingly enough, the present investigation revealed not only peculiarities in the use of gender agreement in heritage Russian, but also some interesting correlations in standard Russian. To be precise, the comparison of heritage Russian with standard Russian shows that the tendency of monolingual speakers to use more and more analytic grammatical structures is not observed in heritage Russian. This tendency is predominantly connected with the frequent use of semantic agreement patterns to express the gender of a noun, instead of changing the noun's morphological form.

Thus, my research makes a contribution to the important issue of gender in heritage Russian. The empirical study enables the investigation of complete gender agreement patterns, namely the patterns, in which both adjectival and verbal components are present. This, in turn, enables the analysis of mixed agreement patterns. I show that mixed agreement is present in the language of advanced heritage speakers, in spite of its complexity.

The differentiation between nouns, which allow numerous agreement patterns, and nouns, which allow only one agreement pattern, approves the importance of optionality in heritage language acquisition. This dissertation provides the evidence that the above-mentioned optionality leads to covert language restructuring. In this way, I extend the study by Laleko (2010) on covert restructuring in heritage Russian.

The main concern of this thesis is the assertion that advanced heritage speakers can achieve target-like language proficiency. However, as the results of my experimental study show, inconsistent input in the situations of greater optionality leads to incomplete heritage language acquisition. Therefore, heritage speakers diverge from monolinguals, although they do not make overt errors.

1.3. The Structure of the Dissertation.

This dissertation is structured as follows. In the first, theoretical part of the thesis I present and explain the phenomena, which are important for the understanding of the goals and peculiarities of my empirical study. First of all, I give the basic information about the

category of grammatical gender and about gender in the Russian language. I pay special attention to mixed gender agreement. This is the content of chapter 2. In chapter 3, I introduce the topic of heritage speakers, their peculiarities and challenges for linguistic theory. Finally, it is important to make the reader acquainted with previous research, dealing with topics similar to mine. That is why I describe some studies, carried out by other linguists on gender agreement and on gender in heritage Russian in chapter 4 of this thesis. Beside this, I show that despite the numerous linguistic studies on the topic in question, there is still a reason for linguistic debate.

I continue the practical part of the thesis in chapter 5 which deals with the description of the present experiment, its methods, its participants and its main predictions. In particular, my experimental study consists of two big parts. The first part deals with the review of the proficiency level of the participants and of their motivation. This review has been carried out with the help of a small interview, a biographical questionnaire and a translation task. The second part of the test served the goals of the main study. This part involved a multiple choice task, which consisted of seventy sentences. The sentences represent different grammatical situations. On the basis of the results of this task, I did the main analysis of the grammatical phenomena in question.

In subchapter 5.6, the results of the study are presented. The results are visualised with the help of tables and diagrams. Chapters 6, 7 present the analysis of the results, the comparison of my results with the results of previous studies and my main conclusions. I consider the so-called nouns in obligatory contexts in chapter 6. Chapter 7 provides the analysis of the nouns, which allow variability of agreement patterns, that is to say nouns in variable contexts. Here I also explain the peculiarities of language restructuring in heritage Russian with respect to gender agreement. Moreover, I raise the issue of the growing analytic grammatical structures in standard Russian. Subchapter 7.11 deals with hybrids referring to females and presents the data as to the avoidance of hybrids in heritage Russian. Finally, subchapter 7.12 describes the main factors that influence the acquisition of gender agreement in heritage Russian. In particular, it deals with the importance of the consistency of input.

Lastly, the most important ideas and conclusions are summarised in chapter 8. In this chapter, I also propose the topics for future research.

In the appendix, I provide the tasks, which were presented to the participants in the test. The list of sources referred to in the writing of this thesis is to be found in the bibliography.

In Russian examples I used transliteration according to the rules of the German Institute for Standardization (Das Deutsche Institut für Normung e. V. (DIN)).

Chapter 2. Russian Gender System.

2.1. Introduction. General Outlines.

There is hardly a more puzzling nominal category in linguistic theory than the category of gender. Languages differ in the representation of grammatical gender to a great extent. This is shown in the work on gender by Corbett (1991). Corbett (1991) demonstrates that most languages completely lack the gender category: Austronesian, Uralic, Turkic language families. English and Afrikaans have three gendered pronouns (feminine, masculine and neuter), but not the grammatical gender in its true sense. In East Asian languages, gender is represented by means of noun classifiers. Moreover, even the languages that have grammatical gender can be subdivided into different groups: languages with masculine and feminine genders (no neuter) (for example, Arabic, Catalan, French, Hebrew); languages with common and neuter gender (for example, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), languages with animate and inanimate gender (for example, Georgian, Sumarian) and the most common group – languages with masculine, feminine and neuter gender (for example, Slavic and Germanic language families, Sanskrit, Latin). Moreover, Corbett's investigation (1991) draws our attention to the following numbers: from over 256 languages, 112 languages have the category of gender (50 languages have 2 genders, 26 languages have 3 genders, 12 languages have 4 genders and 24 languages have 5 or more genders).

Linguists still search for a logical explanation of the use of this category in about one quarter of the world's languages. Still, the high frequency of gender use and the ease with which children acquire it, prove the objectivity and necessity of its existence (Bewer, 2004, p. 87).

Hence, I can argue that gender is a powerful category which helps to classify nouns in a particular language system and to comprehend the mechanisms of categorization in human minds (cf. Polinsky, 2008a). Also, it demonstrates the richness and variation of language systems. It is no wonder that gender has been attracting attention from a great number of theoretical linguists world-wide. As Russian has a well-defined gender system, it is especially interesting for linguistic studies.

This thesis deals with multilingualism. Diversity of representation in the category of gender in different languages raises the question about the use of gender in the situation of language contact. Most of the research on this topic has been done with Russian-English

bilinguals. It would be interesting to test whether the characteristic of English of not having grammatical gender means that bilinguals in German, which has grammatical gender, acquire the category of gender differently or otherwise put, more easily and better.

First of all, let me now focus on the gender category in the Russian language which is the topic of this thesis.

2.2. Gender in Russian. Gender Assignment.

As is typical of Slavic languages, Russian has three gender classes: masculine, feminine and neuter. According to different sources (Corbett, 1991; Polinsky, 2008; Schwartz & Polinsky, 2014), these genders are distributed in the Russian lexicon as follows: masculine nouns make up about 46% of all nominals, feminine nouns make up 41% and neuter nouns – 13%.

Gender assignment is complicated and depends on the structural (morphological and phonetic) or semantic peculiarities of a noun or on the combination of both. It can also be arbitrary.

Masculine and feminine grammatical gender does not always correspond to the natural gender. In this case it is important to differentiate between animate and inanimate nouns. With respect to animate nouns, although there are exceptions, grammatical gender is most often correlated with semantic gender, whereas the grammatical gender of inanimate nouns is predefined and can be defined with the help of formal cues (phonological versus morphological). What is more, neuter nouns stand only for inanimate nouns. Formally, nouns ending in *-a* or *-ja* are feminine (for example, *škola* “school”), nouns ending in a consonant or *-j* are masculine (for example, *stol* “table”), nouns ending in *-o* or *-e* are neuter (for example, *moloko* “milk”). However, this rule is too general and has numerous exceptions. Compare: *den*’ “day” (masculine), but *noč*’ “night” (feminine). In this case, both semantic rules and formal rules cannot be applied, although it should be admitted that these words belong to different declension classes. Compare also: *mužčina* “man” (masculine), but *ženščina* “woman” (feminine). In this example, formal rule contradicts the semantic rule. Another similar example can be represented by the words *put*’ “way” (masculine) and *mut*’ “mud, mess” (feminine). Both semantic and formal rules cannot be applied here.

Another interesting phenomenon which I am going to discuss later in detail in this chapter, involves the so-called hybrid nouns and common gender nouns. Hybrid nouns are formally masculine, but semantically they can be both masculine and feminine. The gender choice depends on the discourse. For example, the noun *avtor* “author” can refer as well to

female authors as to male authors. Similarly, the gender of common gender nouns is discourse-dependent. Contrary to hybrids, common gender nouns are morphologically feminine, but semantically they can refer both to masculine and to feminine nouns. For example, the noun *plaksa* “crybaby” can denote both ‘whining’ males and females.

Laleko (2018) makes an important observation in subdividing gender relationships into equipollent and privative opposition. The author describes animate nouns and claims that the relationship between feminine and masculine gender classes can be different. The so-called equipollent binary oppositions are characteristic for lexically assigned gender. For instance, the nouns *mal’čik* “boy” and *devočka* “girl” are equipollent opposed as “they form a logically equivalent dichotomy in which each member carries a pre-determined gender value that is independent of the specific context in which it occurs” (Laleko, 2018, p. 237). By contrast, primary binary opposition occurs between the nouns, where gender can be differentiated depending on the formal gender marker. To illustrate this type of opposition, let me take the Russian word *monach* “monk”, which is the unmarked member of the opposition and thus can be used in more contexts than its counterpart *monach-in-ja* “nun” (the marked noun). I will deal with the two opposition types later in the thesis.

2.3. Russian Declension Classes.

Linguists argue concerning the question of how native speakers know noun genders. The two main ideas are contradictory: some think that native speakers remember meaning of every noun separately. Others consider that native speakers derive gender from some inflection on the noun (Corbett, 1991, p. 7). As to Russian, I follow the idea of Corbett (1982; 1991) that gender cannot be derived from the lexicon, but is morphologically based. Gender assignment rules depend on the declension class of the noun (Corbett, 1982). No wonder, the Russian declension system is so complicated. It is because it includes two grammatical numbers (singular and plural), three grammatical genders enumerated above and six grammatical cases (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, instrumental, locative). Declension classes present a very contradictory question for Russian linguistics. There is no agreement among scholars as to how many declension classes there are and what kind of nouns they include. The traditional approach determines three nominal paradigms. Some scholars consider that there are four declension classes. Moreover, there are linguists who argue for two-paradigm approach. Let us have a brief look at the main theories on the declension classes.

Corbett (1982) recognises four regular declension classes (p. 216):

- 1st - masculine nouns with zero ending like *zakon* “law”,
- 2nd - feminine nouns ending in -a, -ja like *škola* “school”,
- 3rd - feminine nouns ending in a soft consonant like *kost* “bone”,
- 4th - neuter nouns like *vino* “wine”

and two exception words (*raznosklonjaemye*): *put* “way” and *vremja* “time”.

Table 1 represents these classes in the best possible way (Corbett, 2007, p. 263):

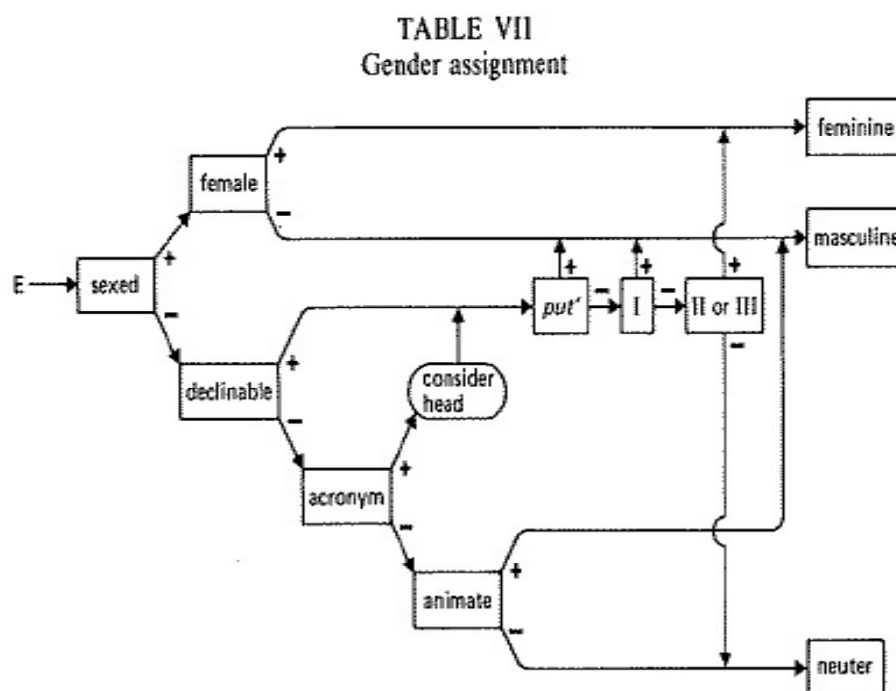
Table 1. Noun Paradigms in Russian.

Table 4.7 *Noun paradigms in Russian*

		I	II	III	IV
SG	NOMINATIVE	<i>zakon</i>	<i>gazeta</i>	<i>kost</i>	<i>vino</i>
	ACCUSATIVE	<i>zakon</i>	<i>gazetu</i>	<i>kost</i>	<i>vino</i>
	GENITIVE	<i>zakona</i>	<i>gazety</i>	<i>kosti</i>	<i>vina</i>
	DATIVE	<i>zakonu</i>	<i>gazete</i>	<i>kosti</i>	<i>vinu</i>
	INSTRUMENTAL	<i>zakonom</i>	<i>gazetoj</i>	<i>kostju</i>	<i>vinom</i>
	LOCATIVE	<i>zakone</i>	<i>gazete</i>	<i>kosti</i>	<i>vine</i>
PL	NOMINATIVE	<i>zakony</i>	<i>gazety</i>	<i>kosti</i>	<i>vina</i>
	ACCUSATIVE	<i>zakony</i>	<i>gazety</i>	<i>kosti</i>	<i>vina</i>
	GENITIVE	<i>zakonov</i>	<i>gazet</i>	<i>kostej</i>	<i>vin</i>
	DATIVE	<i>zakonam</i>	<i>gazetam</i>	<i>kostjam</i>	<i>vinam</i>
	INSTRUMENTAL	<i>zakonami</i>	<i>gazetami</i>	<i>kostjami</i>	<i>vinami</i>
	LOCATIVE	<i>zakonax</i>	<i>gazetax</i>	<i>kostjax</i>	<i>vinax</i>
		'law'	'newspaper'	'bone'	'wine'

In one of his works, Corbett (1982) shows a flow chart to determine gender assignment (p. 216):

Table 2. Gender Assignment.



This classification differs from the traditional one, which is represented in description of grammar in the *Akademičeskaja Grammatika Russkogo Jazyka* “the Academical Grammar of Russian Language”. Traditionally (cf. Švedova, 1980, p. 473), nouns are organized into three declension classes (cf. Corbett, 1982, p. 204):

1st – masculine nouns ending in a consonant and masculine and neuter ending in -o, -e like *dom* “house” and *okno* “window”,

2nd – masculine and feminine nouns ending in -a, -ja like *muščin-a* “man”, *ženščin-a* “woman”,

3rd – feminine nouns ending in a soft consonant like *tenʹ* “shadow”.

Two exceptional words *vremja* “time” and *putʹ* “way” are considered to be declined in a different manner (*raznosklonjaemye*).

Importantly, declension classes are represented differently in academical grammars of Russian formulated by different authors. This topic, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

To give a more comprehensive picture of the approaches to the Russian declension classes, one could have a look at the two-declension approach by Zaliznjak (as cited in Corbett, 1982, p.208):

Table 3. Two-paradigm Solution.

Two-paradigm solution (Zaliznjak version).

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine
Declension I	zakon	vino	škola
Declension II	put'	vremja	kost'

The Zaliznjak's approach applies to both regular cases such as *škola* "school" or *zakon* "law" and exceptions such as *put'* "way", *vremja* "time".

I will rely on the classification of Corbett (2007) in this thesis.

The fact that even monolingual speakers happen to make errors in gender assignment shows how complicated Russian declension classes and at the same time Russian gender assignment are. For instance, monolinguals sometimes treat feminine nouns ending in a palatalized consonant such as *noč'* "night" as masculine (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 45). No wonder that bilinguals have even more problems with Russian noun paradigms. I will come to this later in this thesis.

2.4. Gender Agreement in Russian.

Gender agreement is the most important feature in the Russian gender system. More than that, it is the most important topic for the present work. As we have seen above, gender in Russian is – in a lot of cases - not obvious from the noun itself. However, gender is expressed through agreement, that is to say on the endings of the words related to the noun: adjectives, participles, demonstratives, possessive pronouns, numerals, verbs in past tense and pronouns. Plural nouns are not marked for gender. Words related to a noun (such as adjectives, particles, possessive pronouns, demonstratives, numerals, verbs) agree with its gender. They change their morphological form depending on the gender of the noun they refer to. Speaking about gender agreement, Corbett (1988) uses the following terminology

that I adopt in this work: nouns are called agreement controllers, whereas words depending on the noun and reflecting its gender in their form are called agreement targets (p. 3).

It is the presence of the agreement evidence that helps us to differentiate if a language has the gender category. Noun itself does not always provide this information. Thus, Corbett (2007) truly defines agreement as the only “criterion for gender” (p. 243).

In the whole, one should differentiate between three types of gender depending on the gender agreement:

- Semantic gender, which is sometimes called lexical gender, is inherently specified for the noun. For instance, *devočka* “girl” is undoubtedly feminine, whereas *mal’čik* “boy” is masculine.
- Formal gender, also called morphological or syntactic gender, can be easily determined by the form of the noun that is with the help of the declension classes. For example, *učitel’-ni-ca* “female teacher” (declension class II) is feminine, but *učitel’-Ø* “male teacher” (declension class I) is masculine. Declension classes are especially helpful if the noun form is ambiguous, like *den’* “day” (masculine), *ten’* “shadow” (feminine).
- Referential gender relates to the whole nominal phrase and depends on the context. For example:

(1) Moj direktor horošij. Ona vseгда mne pomagaet.

My.M¹ director good.M She always me help.

“My director is a good one. She always helps me.”

The pronoun *ona* “she” shows that the noun *direktor* “director” refers to a woman.

A simplified table of agreeing forms in Russian can be represented like this (Corbett, 1988, p. 9):

Table 4. Consistent Agreement Patterns in Russian.

Attributive Adjective	Predicate	Relative Pronoun	Personal Pronoun	Normative Gender
-yj	-Ø	-yj	on	masculine
-aja	-a	-aja	ona	feminine
-oje	-o	-oje	ono	neuter

1 The category of gender is of importance for this thesis. That is why I use only those glosses, which are relevant for gender.

2.5. Mixed Agreement. Formal-Semantic Discrepancy.

2.5.1. Mixed Agreement in Russian.

Thus, gender assignment and gender agreement are two main notions with respect to the category of grammatical gender. In this thesis I am going to deal with gender agreement. One of the important peculiarities of the Russian gender agreement is the phenomenon of mixed agreement. Let me demonstrate this phenomenon on some examples:

(2) Krasiv-aja devuš-k-a priš-l-a v kafe (feminine agreement)

beautiful.F girl.F came.F into café

“A beautiful girl came into the café”

(3) Molod-oj čelovek-Ø vypil-Ø vody (masculine agreement)

Young.M man.M drank.M water

“A young man drank some water”

(4) Nov-yj direktor-Ø voš-l-a (mixed agreement)

New.M director.F came.fem

“New director came in”

Example (4) represents a very good example of mixed agreement. The noun *direktor* “director” is a hybrid noun, which has a masculine form, but in this particular context refers to a female. Mixed agreement is the most typical agreement type with hybrids: the adjective, that precedes the noun, takes the morphological form of the noun, whereas the verb, that follows the noun, adopts the semantic gender of the hybrid. It is important to note that both feminine (*nov-aja direktor vošla*, “new director came in”) and masculine (*nov-yj direktor voš-ěl*, “new director came in”) forms are possible in the above given sentence. Nevertheless, mixed agreement is the most widely used agreement with hybrid nouns and with some other exceptional cases (for instance, female names ending in a consonant). Let us look at this fascinating phenomenon in more detail.

2.5.2. Hybrid Nouns.

First of all, I want to pay attention to hybrid nouns, the most common and interesting case of mixed agreement in Russian. Hybrid nouns are formally masculine nouns, which

refer to men as well as to women. The bulk of hybrids means some kind of occupation. Hybrids appeared as a result of the important social change after the October Revolution – the role of women underwent significant changes in soviet times: women got the same rights and pursued the same professions as men. Consequently, words denoting these professions (hybrids) began to refer to women, although their morphological form has not changed. As a result, we have a discrepancy: morphological (formal) agreement does not always correspond to the semantic meaning of the word. As we can see from the examples below (referential agreement: feminine), formal agreement is used more often and has fewer constraints than the semantic one:

(5) Formal agreement:

Moj pedagog polučil priz.

My.M teacher got.M prize

“My teacher has got a prize”

(6) Mixed agreement with the semantic attributive agreement is impossible:

*Moja pedagog polučil priz.

*My.F teacher got.M prize

(7) Mixed agreement with the formal attributive agreement:

Moj pedagog polučila priz.

My.M teacher got.F prize

“My teacher has got a prize”

(8) Semantic agreement:

Moja pedagog polučila priz.

My.F teacher got.F prize

“My teacher has got a prize”

Moreover, semantic agreement is only possible in the nominative case. In five other cases, formal agreement is required:

(9) Ja idu k svoemu/*svoej pedagogu.

I go to my.M/*F teacher

“I go to my (female) teacher”

2.5.3. Common Gender Nouns.

Another example of formal-semantic discrepancy in Russian is represented by the so-called common gender nouns. These are animate nouns, which are formally feminine, but can be both feminine and masculine semantically. Let us have a look at the following example:

- (10) Ehtot/ehta sirota žil/žila odinoko.
this.M/F orphan lived.M/F alone
“This orphan lived alone”

Without a context it is impossible to determine the semantic gender of *sirota* “orphan”. If *sirota* “orphan” means a male person, then both masculine (semantic) and feminine (syntactic) agreements are possible. In the case of feminine gender, semantic and syntactic agreements coincide and the feminine agreement is used.

There are few common gender nouns in Russian, but some of them are used very frequently: *podliza* “sycophant”, *neženka* “mollycoddle”, *bedolaga* “poor fellow”. So, common gender nouns are used daily by native speakers and represent an important phenomenon for linguistic studies.

2.5.4. Female Names Ending in *-ik/ -ok*. Male Names and Male Terms Ending in *-a/ -ja*.

Hybrids and common gender nouns are definitely the most interesting nouns in which semantic and formal gender do not always coincide. However, there are several other noun types with similar ambiguity. I will follow Rodina (2008) and investigate two more puzzling cases: nouns which are semantically masculine but end in a vowel and female names ending in the suffixes *-ik, -ok*.

Here are some examples of masculine nouns ending in a vowel *-a/ -ja*: *papa* “papa”, *djadja* “uncle”, *Saša*, *Kostja*. Most of these nouns denote family relationships or male names. At first sight, these nouns look like common gender nouns. The important difference is that the nouns under consideration are always masculine and can have only masculine agreement.

Female names ending in the suffixes *-ik*, *-ok* are also wide-spread in Russian. With the help of the above-mentioned suffixes, diminutive forms of the names are built. Similar to male nouns ending in *-a/ -ja*, these nouns can refer only to females. For example: *Sveta* → *Svet-ik*, *Ira* → *Ir-č-ik*, *Ir-ok*. In the nominative case both feminine and masculine agreements are possible with these nouns. In all other cases only formal, that is masculine, agreement is possible:

(11) Moj/moja Svetik opjat' ušël/ušla.
 My.M/F Svetik.nom. again went.M/F
 "My Svetik went away again"

(12) Moemu/*moej Svetiku nechorošo
 My.M/*F Sveik.Dat. not well
 "My Svetik does not feel well"

Similar to hybrids and common gender nouns, these two noun types will play an important role in the practical part of this thesis.

2.5.5. Agreement Hierarchy.

The main principles of the mixed agreement were thoroughly analysed and summarized by Corbett in his paper *Agreement Hierarchy* (1979). Corbett (1979) considers numerous languages and pays special attention to Russian and German. The linguist determines one common pattern in all the languages he deals with. In the nominal phrase with mixed agreement the following correlation between the type of agreement and the position of the word in the phrase can be established: syntactic agreement is more likely to occur to the left of the noun (attributive position). By contrast, semantic agreement is more common to the right of the noun that is in the predicative position. As a result, syntactic agreement is least common in the referential position (for instance, with pronouns). Corbett (1991) formulates his idea as follows: "The further left an element on the hierarchy, the more likely syntactic agreement is to occur, the further right, the more likely semantic agreement" is to occur (p. 204). Corbett (1979) refers to this phenomenon as the "monotonic decrease of syntactic agreement" (p. 204).

As a consequence for this rule, if syntactic agreement occurs in some particular position on the hierarchy, it will also occur in all other positions to the left. Vice versa,

semantic agreement will occur in all the positions to the right of the position it first occurs. This is how we can represent this pattern:

Attribute < Predicate < Relative Pronoun < Personal Pronoun

If we apply this pattern to the Example (7) above, we will see that hybrids represent strong evidence in favour of Corbett's idea. The attribute *moj*.M "my" has syntactic agreement, whereas the verb *polučil-a*.F "has got" has semantic agreement. If we want to continue the idea of the sentence and to use a pronoun, it would be feminine. Masculine pronoun would be ungrammatical in this case:

(13) Moj pedagog polučila priz. Ona rada./ *On rad.
My.M teacher got.F prize. She is.F happy. / *He is.M happy.
"My teacher has got a prize. She is happy"

By contrast, in the example (5), we have masculine agreement in both cases. Therefore, both masculine and feminine agreements with the pronoun are possible:

(14) Moj pedagog polučil priz. Ona rada.
My.M teacher got.M prize. She is.F happy.
"My teacher has got a prize. She is happy"

This variant is possible because of the tendency to use semantic agreement to the right of the head noun. It proves the idea that "syntactic agreement decreases monotonically from left to right" (Corbett, 1991, p. 211).

Let me consider one more example:

(15) Moj pedagog polučil priz. On rad.
My.M teacher got.M prize. He is.M happy.
"My teacher has got a prize. He is happy"

This variant is possible because the sentence has masculine agreement and therefore feminine agreement is not necessary, although more likely.

Steriopolo (2019a) fulfils the hierarchy of Corbett (1979) and subdivides the attributes into two different types (p. 3). Following the ideas of Pesetsky (2013), she differentiates

between high and low attributes, depending on their position in the nominal phrase structure (as cited in Steriopolo, 2019a, p. 3, pp.8-9). Low attributes take only formal gender. The meaning of these adjectives is very important for the understanding of the nominal phrase and makes the meaning of the noun more concrete: *zubnoj*.Adj. *vrač*.Nom. “dentist”, *klassnyj*.Adj. *rukovoditel*'.Nom. “class supervisor”.

Other Corbett examples taken from Russian and other languages prove the correctness of the Agreement Hierarchy. But, the detailed analysis of these data goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Please check Corbett (1979, 1991) for more information.

2.5.6. Mixed Agreement with Other Grammatical Categories.

Mixed agreement and agreement fluctuations are not as seldom in the Russian language as may be thought at first sight. They include not only the category of gender, but also other grammatical categories.

As for gender, along with the exceptional noun classes, which are investigated in detail in this thesis, there are some more examples, which allow more than one grammatically correct agreement. For instance, nouns which are modified by nouns with quantitative meaning, can be used with different verbal agreements. The verbs can be used with the neuter gender or they can take the gender of the noun with quantitative meaning. Both of these verb agreements are correct (Švedova, 1980a, p. 244). For instance:

(16) *Sladkogo ostavalos'/ostavalas' liš kapel'ka.*

Sweets remained.N/F only drop

“There remained only few sweets”

With regard to other noun categories, the grammatical category of number is of interest. The possibility to use different agreement patterns with subjects, modified by a numeral, or with nouns, denoting number, is a common phenomenon in Russian (Švedova, 1980b, p. 242). This is the case in the following situations taken from Švedova (1980b, pp. 242-244):

- if the subject is represented by a collective numeral. For example,

(17) *Prišli/prišlo tol'ko troe.*

Came.PL/SG.N only three

“There came only three of them”

- if the subject consists of a numeral and of a noun in the genitive case. For example,

(18) Prišli/prišlo tri studentov.

Came.PL/SG.N three students

“There came three students”

- if the subject includes such words as *bol'sinstvo* “most, majority”, *množestvo* “plenty, lot”. For example,

(19) Bol'sinstvo ljudi hoteli/hotelo vakcinirovat'sja.

Most people wanted.PL/SG.N to be vaccinated.

“Most people wanted to be vaccinated”

- if the subject is represented by the word *pustjaki* “trifles” with the meaning “not much”. For example,

(20) Dopisat' rabotu ostalis'/ostalos' suščie pustjaki.

Finish writing work left.PL/SG.N mere trifles

“To finish writing the paper is a mere trifle”

- if the subject includes the word *časť* “a part of”. For example,

(21) Ne prišli/prišla časť studentov.

Not came.PL/F.SG part students

“Some students did not come”

- if the subject includes the component *pol-* “a half” or the word *poltora/poltory* “one and a half” and denotes a group of people. For example,

(22) Polklassa zaboileli/zaboilelo.

Half of a class got ill.PL/SG.N

“Half of the class got ill”

Moreover, if the subject includes an enumeration of plural and singular nouns, then the verb agreement depends on the noun, which stands immediately before or after the verb. For example,

(23) V klasse nachoditjsa/nachodjatsja učitel'/učitelja, studenty i učeniki.

In class were.SG.M/PL teacher.SG/PL, students and pupils.

"There were/was teachers/a teacher, students and pupils in the class"

If the subject consists of more than one noun (in plural or in singular), both plural and singular verb agreements are possible. For example,

(24) K mame bežali/bežala Sonja i Daria.

To mama ran.PL/SG.F Sonja and Daria

"Both Sonja and Daria were running to their mother"

If the subject includes nouns, which denote compatibility or sequences, both plural and singular forms of the verb are possible. For example,

(25) Mama s synom prišli/prišla k vraču.

Mama and son came.PL/SG.F to doctor

"Mama and son came to the doctor"

If the subject is represented by pronouns *kto* "who", *kto-to* "someone, somebody", *kto-nibud'* "someone, somebody", *kto-libo* "someone, somebody", *koe-kto* "someone, somebody" and refers to another pronoun in the plural form in the same sentence or if these pronouns stand before and refer to the noun in the plural form, then both plural and singular verbal agreements are possible. For example,

(26) Vse, kto uspeli/uspel prijeti vovremja, svobodny.

All who managed.PL/SG.M come at time free

"Everyone, who has managed to come punctually, can go now"

(27) Koe-kto iz soldat stali/stal plakat'.

Some from soldiers began.PL/SG.M cry

"Some soldiers started to cry"

Some of the above-presented examples have exceptions. However, the detailed description of these mixed agreement cases goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Another interesting phenomenon in the Russian language, which deals with the possibility to use more than one agreement pattern, is represented by nouns, which can have dual gender value, depending on such factors as, for example, genre (colloquial language, literary language) and language change (contemporary language, archaic language) (Švedova, 1980a, p. 468). Interestingly, the duality of the gender of these nouns can be represented not only by agreement patterns, but also by the form of the nouns. For example, such word as *žiraf* “giraffe.M” can be used in the feminine form *žirafa* “giraffe.F” in colloquial speech (Švedova, 1980a, p.468). Such a contemporary word as *zal* “hall.M” has an archaic feminine form *zala* “hall.F”, which is not used nowadays, but can be found in literature (Švedova, 1980a, p.468). Additionally, there are words, which are usually used in the plural and which in their singular form can be used both with feminine and with masculine gender. For example, *rel'sy* “rails” → *rel's* “rail.M” versus *rel'sa* “rail.F”, *spazmy* “spasms” → *spazm* “spasm.M” versus *spazma* “spasm.F” (Švedova, 1980a, p.468).

Thus, the variability of gender agreement in Russian is evident. The above-described examples illustrate how rich and complicated the topic of mixed agreement and the variability of agreement patterns in the Russian language is. As I will show later in this thesis, this variability leads to new interesting developments that are present not only in the contemporary Russian language, but also in the heritage Russian language.

2.5.7. The Notion of Grammatical Norm in the Russian Language.

The possibility to use different agreement patterns with one and the same noun raises the question of the language norm in the Russian language. Indeed, the criteria for the most appropriate agreement pattern in a particular context vary depending on genre, education level of the speakers, epoch and so on. It seems that there is no one particular norm for these cases in the Russian language. Truly, language norm is in constant development. Old and new norms often exist simultaneously. Sometimes, colloquial or even vulgar language norms replace the existing rules and invade the literary norm. According to Shyneyko (2015), “a literary norm is a set of the rules of verbal behaviour” (p. 283). Nevertheless, the author pays attention to the importance of communicative freedom of speakers. Language norm is created by linguists and is registered in vocabularies. It represents a standard of language in

some particular period of time. This norm exists parallelly in the language of ordinary people, who know the norm, but change it in a natural way (Shyneyko, 2015, p. 292).

Interestingly enough, Kostomarov (2012) rejects the common differentiation between norm and abnormality. He suggests that differentiation be in three categories – norm, abnormality and antinorm (p. 13). The main function of norm is the absolute mutual understanding of people. The main function of abnormality is the individualisation and diversity of language. Importantly, following Šžerba (1958), Kostomarov (2012) claims that abnormality can be skilfully used by speakers only if they know the norm well enough (p. 16). Abnormality is not fixed in vocabularies or textbooks. However, it is socially acceptable and serves language updating. Finally, the antinorm is an unacceptable, incorrect use of language (Kostomarov, 2012, p. 13, p. 18).

Kostomarov (2012) shows that abnormality can develop into the norm. Language is changing constantly, but language speakers usually do not notice it. A language needs about 75 years in order to accept the abnormality (p. 18). Especially now, in the time of democratisation, liberal use of language leads to a quick acceptability of abnormality in the language (Kostomarov, 2012, p. 18).

Linguists are usually agreed that these are political and economic changes which lead to language change (Šustenko, 2005, Kostomarov, 2012, Zemskaja, 2004, Puškareva, 2016). Especially important for contemporary standard Russian were such changes as the October Revolution, the Second World War, new technical and democratic developments. With respect to Russian, Puškareva (2016) calls the instability of a historical situation to be the catalyst of language development and language change (p. 7). It is not surprising that Zemskaja (2004) claims that nowadays the use of spontaneous, informal language is as popular as never before. Norm is no longer perceived as a prohibition, but as a choice between different possible variants in order to fit some particular context (Zemskaja, 2004, pp. 513-565).

Krysin (2008) develops the idea of the instability and variety of the Russian language and indicates not only historical, but also social reasons for language diversity. Apart from social democratisation and deideologisation of contemporary standard Russian, the scholar considers professional, social, territorial and age factors to be important for variability of language structures (Krysin, 2008, pp. 13-15). Depending on the professional sphere, place of residence (city or village) and slang, different abnormal grammatical and lexical structures can be acceptable for language speakers.

Moreover, nowadays people of different social classes can become public. As a result, their slang becomes socially acceptable. With time, it becomes a norm. In the whole, Krysin

(2008) observes “softening of literary norm” (p. 15). For example, such words as *krutoj* “cool”, *limon* “million”, *tusovka* “party”, which were characteristic for the language of gangsters, are used in standard Russian now (Krysin, 2008, pp. 17-19). Moreover, because of the constant migration of people from villages to the cities, the distribution of different dialects as a part of the norm takes place. The simplification of the language of mass media and social media also plays an important role in this process (Krysin, 2008, pp. 19-22).

Slavists describe different phenomena of language change and the subsequent language variability. Some of them have already been mentioned in this thesis. Krysin (2008), for example, considers the duality of noun gender in such words as *šampun’* “shampoo” or *tjul’* “tulle”, which were usually used with masculine gender, but are often used with feminine gender today (pp. 22-23). Along with it, professional slang such as *askat’* “ask” or *vorkovat’* “work”, typical of IT-workers are used more often in the Russian language at all social layers (p. 24). Furthermore, noun cases can be interchangeable, stress can be relocated, etcetera.

Besides, most Slavists notice the development of analytical structures in the synthetic Russian language (Zemskaja, 2004; Puškareva, 2016; Kostomarov, 2012). The question of analytic structures in Russian is important for this thesis, which will be shown in chapters 6 and 7. More than that, I will return to the question of language variability and its role in language development in these two chapters.

Summarising, the Russian language is constantly developing. This is a natural process, which reflects social, economic and historical changes in the life of Russian native speakers. Sometimes language development leads to the acceptance of more than one structure as a norm and, as a result, to the diversity of the language.

2.6. DP-Structure of Nouns under Consideration.

To present the whole picture of the main mechanisms of the Russian mixed agreement, let me sketch out the most important ideas concerning the phrase structure. Numerous linguists have made an attempt to present the DP-structure of the mixed gender agreement.

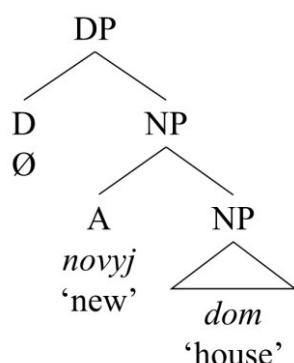
2.6.1. Theoretical Background.

I will follow the theoretical ideas within the framework of generative grammar and present some basic nominal structures that are of interest for the topic of this discussion. I am not going to describe the different concepts of the structure of mixed agreement in a

detail. It is enough for the purposes of this thesis that I show the schemes that I consider to be most important.

As a reminder, the well-known DP-Hypothesis was proposed by Abney in 1987 as an attempt to represent the nominal phrase structurally as the functional projection headed by D (determiner) and taking an NP (noun phrase) complement. For instance, the nominal phrase *a/the new house* will be structured like this (as cited in King, 2015 p.10):

Scheme 1. DP-Structure.



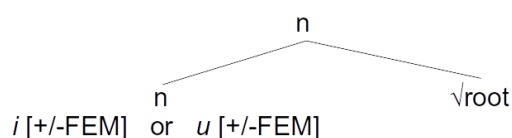
This basic nominal structure was revised depending on the language and the research goals by many scholars. I will stick to the theory of Distributed Morphology, proposed by Halle and Marantz in 1993, which main idea is the structural identity between words and sentences (as cited in Steriopolo, 2018b). In this structure, morphemes within the words relate identically to words within sentences (Steriopolo, 2018b, pp. 308-309). The approach rejects the idea of the unified lexicon and claims that lexical information is distributed in several lists which include: the formative list (syntactic operations), the exponent list (morpho- phonological content) and the encyclopedia (semantic information). Words can be formed either from the category neutral $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$, which must be categorized throughout the derivation, or from syntactic categories (Steriopolo, 2018b, pp. 308-309). Let me now concentrate my attention on the nominal phrase, and in particular on the representation of gender in the nominal phrase.

2.6.2. The Category of Gender and the DP-Structure. DP-Structure of Exceptional Nouns.

In her work “The Morphosyntax of Gender” (2015), Kramer examines gender behaviour cross-linguistically within the framework of Distributed Morphology and comes to the conclusion that gender features are located on the category-defining head *n* (see the Scheme 2 below). Gender features can be interpretable for natural gender and therefore affect the interpretation of the nominal structure or they can be uninterpretable for arbitrary gender having no affect on further interpretation of the structure (Kramer 2015, pp. 37-42).

In Scheme 2 the simplest nominal structure is presented.

Scheme 2. Nominal Structure.



The list below shows the feature inventory, proposed by Kramer (2015, p. 50, p. 170):

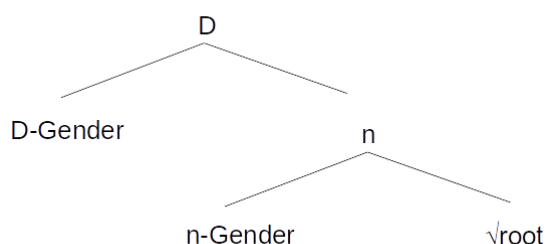
- a. *n* *i* [+FEM] female natural gender
- b. *n* *i* [-FEM] male natural gender
- c. *n* no natural gender, default
- d. *n* *u* [-FEM] male natural gender
- a. *n* *u* [+FEM] female natural gender

Thus, according to Kramer (2015), noun $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$ have no gender interpretation. Gender features are licensed in a particular context and are located on the head *n* (Kramer 2015, pp. 37-42).

Steriopolo (2018b) works on the structure of the Russian nominal phrases, and especially on the problem of mixed agreement. Steriopolo and Wiltschko (2010) formulated the Distributed Gender Hypothesis, according to which gender is distributed across three distinct syntactic positions: $\sqrt{\text{root}}$ -gender (semantic gender), *n*-gender (grammatical gender)

and D-gender (discourse gender). This proposal was revised by Steriopolo (2018c). The author contradicts the idea that semantic gender can be located on featureless and acategorical $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$ and distinguishes two syntactic positions for gender: D-gender (discourse or referential gender) and n -gender (semantic or natural gender) (Steriopolo, 2018b, p. 310). Moreover, Steriopolo (2017b) claims that the noun derivation goes through two independent cycles: a D-cycle (context-dependent) and a n -cycle (default) (p. 28-35).

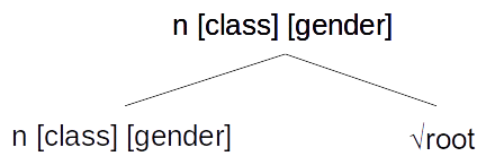
Scheme 3. Gender Position (Steriopolo, 2018b).



Following the idea of Corbett (2007) that one can predict noun's gender from its declension class, but not the other way around, Steriopolo (2018b) suggests that Russian nouns are specified for declension class and not for grammatical gender (p. 317). She considers Russian sex-differentiable nouns and claims that they are specified by a combination of declension class and the natural gender features [male] and [female]. This idea in the approach of Steriopolo (2018b) differs from that of Kramer (2015), who locates both grammatical (uninterpretable) gender features and natural (interpretable) gender features on the head n .

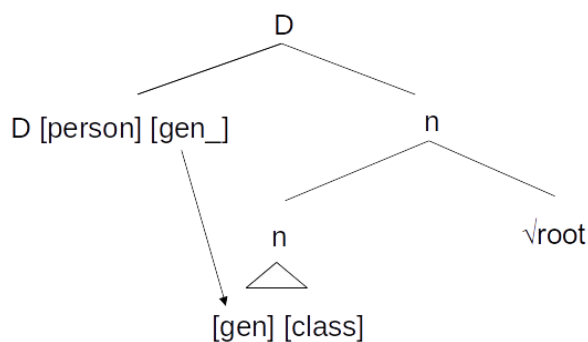
Steriopolo (2018b) proves that there is a natural gender feature by showing that there exist nouns referring to males, but belonging to the declension class II, whereas most nouns of this declension class are feminine. The masculine natural gender feature makes this exception possible: *mužčina* "man", *djadja* "uncle". Moreover, in the examples of the nominalizing suffixes, such as *-uch-*, in *Pavel* (declension class I, masculine) – *Pavl-uch-a* (colloquial) (declension class II, masculine) and *golod* (declension class I, masculine) "hunger" – *golod-uch-a* (declension class II, feminine) "hunger" (colloquial), the author shows that the suffix *-uch-* is not specified for gender, but for declension class, otherwise there would be no gender variation (Steriopolo, 2018b, p. 317-318). Steriopolo's (2018b) noun structure looks like this (p. 321):

Scheme 4. Noun Structure (Steriopolo, 2018b).



The exceptions to this structure are hybrids and common gender nouns. According to Steriopolo (2018b), these nouns have no natural gender features. Instead, they have the contextual gender feature [person], located on D. Steriopolo adopts the idea of Kucerova (2018) who considers that gender features valuation can be determined from the context and is dependent on the feature [person] and be located on D (as cited in Steriopolo 2018b, p. 322, p. 332).

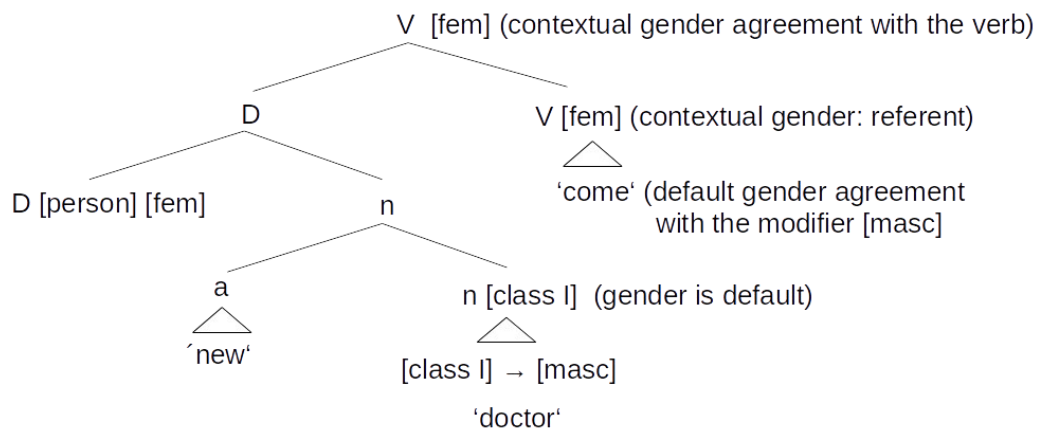
Scheme 5. The Feature [person].



Let us look at one of the examples of mixed gender agreement with hybrids presented by Steriopolo (2018b, p. 330):

(28) Novyj vrač prišl-a vovremja
 new.M doctor came.F punctually
 “A new doctor came punctually”

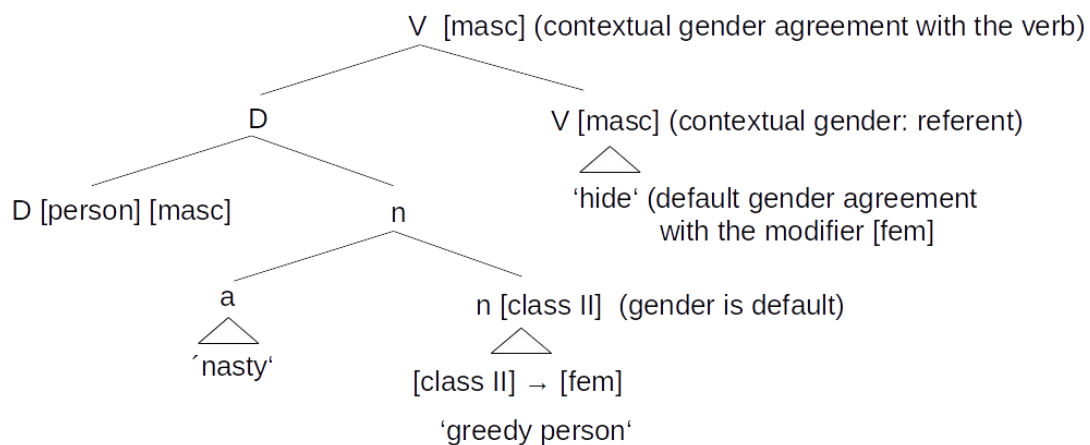
Scheme 6. Mixed Gender Agreement with Hybrids.



Here is the example of a sentence with a common gender noun, also taken from Steriopolo (2018b, p. 326):

- (29) Vrednaja žadina opjat' vse konfety sprjatal.
 Nasty.F greedy.person again all sweets hid.M
 "The nasty greedy person hid all the sweets again"

Scheme 7. Mixed Gender Agreement with Common Gender Nouns.



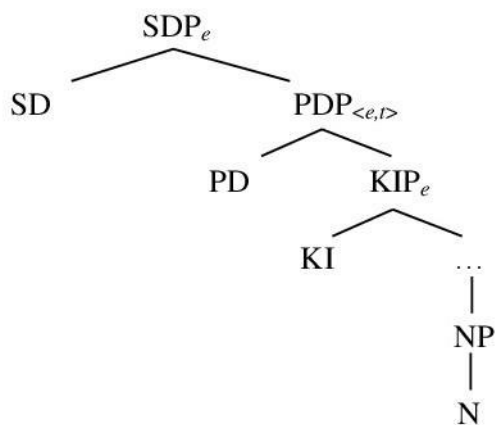
2.6.3. Zamparelli's Approach. DP-Structure of Exceptional Nouns.

In her article “Mixed Gender Agreement in the Case of Russian Hybrid Nouns”, Steriopolo (2019a) considers the problem of sentences with mixed agreement where the noun is modified by a demonstrative *ehtot* “this.M” or *eha* “this.F”. In the example (30) below, the feminine feature cannot be located on D, because this position is already occupied by the masculine demonstrative pronoun *ehtot* “this.M”:

- (30) *Ehtot zubnoj vrač postavila plombu.*
this.M doctor put.F filling
“This dentist did a filling”

Following the revisited Distributed Gender Hypothesis and the DP-approach of Abney, Steriopolo (2019a) presents a multiple-layer DP-hypothesis by Zamparelli (1995) as the most accurate and applicable for this particular problem in the Russian language (as cited in Steriopolo, 2019a, pp. 9-14):

Scheme 8. Zamparelli's Approach.

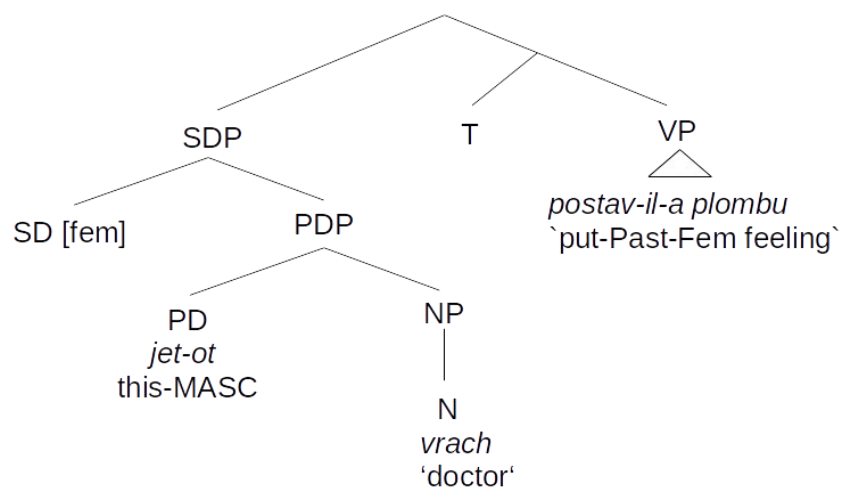


This scheme needs some explanation: Zamparelli presents a DP-structure which consists of different layers, all of which have a particular semantic function: Strong Determiner Phrase (SDP) has a referential function, Predicative Determiner Phrase (PDP) has a predicative function, Kind Determiner Phrase (KDP) has the function of kind interpretation. The advantage of such a structure is that it allows the presentation both of feminine and masculine agreement with one noun.

And this is how this scheme can be applicable to the Russian hybrid. I copy the examples of Steriopolo (2019a, p. 10) here:

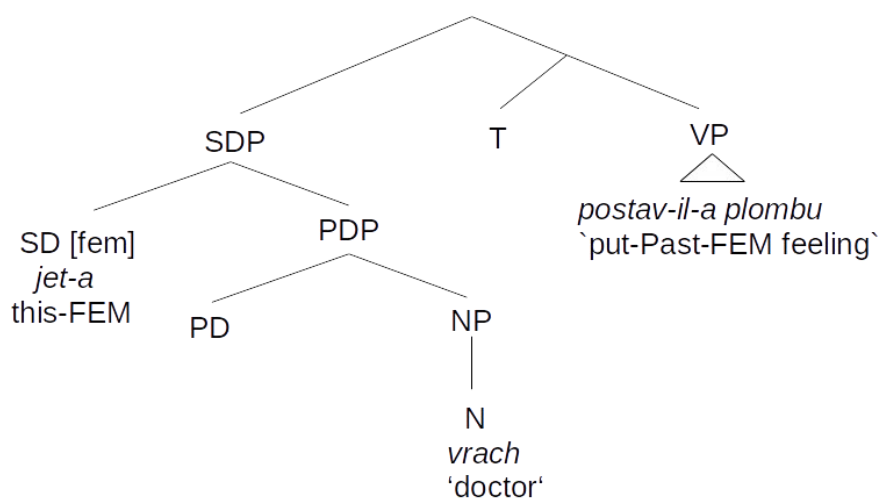
- (31) Ehtot vrač postavila plombu.
 this.M doctor put.F filling
 "This doctor did a filling"

Scheme 9. The Structure of Example (31).



- (32) Ehta vrač postavila plombu.
 this.F doctor put.F filling
 "This doctor did a filling"

Scheme 10. The Structure of Example (32).

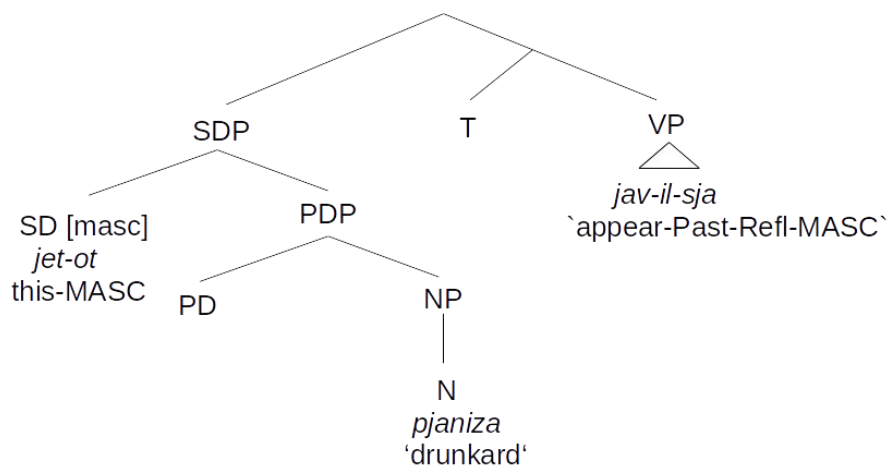


In scheme 9 the semantic feature *female* is located under SD, whereas the demonstrative *ehtot* “this.M” is under PD and therefore is lower in the structure than both the *female* feature and the verb, which agrees with this feature. Because of the low position in the structure *ehtot* “this.M” does not agree with the feminine feature and remains masculine.

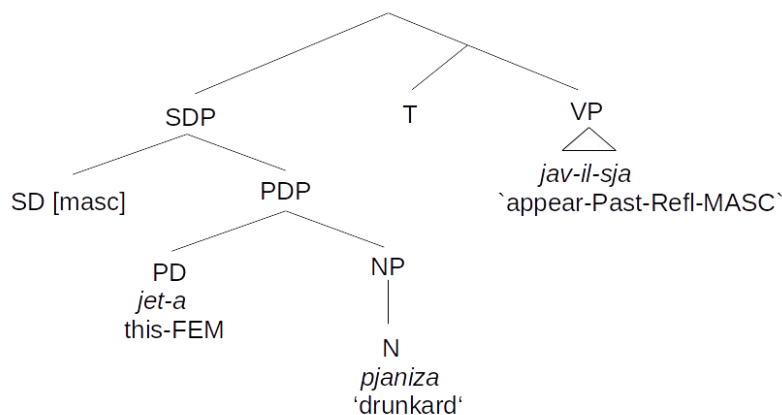
By contrast, in scheme 10 both the demonstrative and the semantic feature *female* are located under SD. This is possible due to the version of the multi-layered DP-hypothesis, formulated by Cheng, Heycock and Zamparelli in 2017 (as cited in Steriopolo 2019a). Thus, the demonstrative agrees with this feature and becomes feminine.

Steriopolo successfully applies Zamparelli’s approach to common gender nouns (2019a, p. 13):

Scheme 11. Zamparelli’s Approach and Common Gender Nouns with *ehtot* “this.M”.



Scheme 12. Zamparelli’s Approach and Common Gender Nouns with *ehtot* “this.M”.



What is more, Steriopolo (2019a) differentiates between the low and high adjectives in the DP-Structure (pp. 5-6). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, low adjectives occupy the lower position in the DP-structure. In our case, the low adjective modifies N. By contrast, high adjectives occur higher, namely as a modifier of D.

Many other challenges for mixed agreement and DP-structure have been described in linguistic theory. More detailed discussion of this topic, however, will go beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.7. The Comparison of Russian and German Gender Categories.

As I am going to investigate Russian-German bilinguals, let me briefly point out the main differences and similarities of Russian and German gender categories. Both Russian and German have the three-gender system. Gender division includes masculine, feminine and neuter. Gender assignment is complicated and depends on the structural (morphological and phonetic) or semantic peculiarities of a noun or on the combination of both. It can also be arbitrary. Words related to a noun (such as adjectives, particles, possessive pronouns, demonstratives, numerals, verbs) agree with its gender. They change their morphological form depending on the gender of the noun they refer to.

The Russian gender system seems to be easier to acquire than the German one. The reason is that German has many more words with the “unmotivated” gender which cannot be decoded on the basis of meaning or form of the noun (Dieser, 2009, p. 1). Most of the Russian nouns obey gender assignment rules which depend on the declension class of the noun (Corbett, 1991, p. 3). In German, gender assignment and gender agreement rules are more complicated. First of all, the noun form very rarely signals its gender. Gender is determined directly in the lexicon. Articles and inflections of the words related to a noun (adjectives, pronouns) help to identify its gender (for example, *ein großer Raum* “a big house”, **das** *Haus* “the house”). There are some exceptions, however, that include the suffixes *-chen*, *-lein* and others that are typical for the neuter; *-heit*, *-ung* and others that are typical for the feminine; *-el*, *-er* and others that are typical for the masculine (Bewer, 2004, pp. 89-92). The gender, number and case of a noun are indicated in one inflection or determiner.

As the gender of a noun in German in most cases is not manifested on the noun itself, it becomes extremely difficult to differentiate whether gender errors relate to agreement or to assignment (Montrul et al., 2008, p. 507). Semantic factors are also very important for

gender assignment in German. Most male animate nouns are masculine, whereas most female animate nouns are feminine. The gender of inanimate nouns is not so obvious. For example: days of the week, months, years, names of cars, rainfall etc. are masculine; the names of ships and motorcycles are feminine and the names of languages and colours are neuter. However, even these rules have exceptions. For example, *das Bier* “beer” is neuter, but *die Bowle* (“punch”) is feminine, although denotes alcohol.

Both Russian and German gender systems are complicated for a non-native speaker. Russian heritage speakers in Germany have the advantage in that they are native speakers of both languages. But what does this advantage bring? Does it really mean that they will not have problems in gender assignment and agreement in their heritage language? I will give the answers to these questions in my research.

2.8. Conclusion.

Mixed agreement, or semantic-morphological agreement to be precise, is a unique linguistic phenomenon which is presented in the Russian language especially strongly. In this chapter I have described the Russian gender system and paid special attention to the phenomenon of mixed agreement. The above-mentioned four types of nouns – hybrids, common gender nouns, masculine nouns ending in a vowel and denoting family relationships or male names and female names ending in the suffixes *-ik/ -ok* – often lead to conflict situations, which in turn manifest themselves in the errors speakers make.

Many aspects of mixed agreement in Russian have already been analysed in theoretical and applied linguistics. This thesis is going to investigate if such a complicated phenomenon as mixed agreement is used correctly by Russian monolinguals and by Russian-German bilinguals. And if not, then it would be interesting to differentiate the main problems of the above mentioned speakers and the differences in their language use.

Despite the fact that the topic under investigation, namely the use of gender by multilingual speakers, has just recently got the attention of scholars, numerous investigations of it have already been done all over the world.

Chapter 3. Heritage Languages and Heritage Speakers.

3.1. Introduction.

Nowadays, the knowledge of at least one foreign language is not just a possibility for each person, but a necessity. Moreover, it comes as no surprise if people have more than one native language. This tendency is definitely result of the globalisation, which began in the 20th century. However, one should not ignore the fact that bi- and multilingualism have always been present in human history: because of wars, captivities and enslavement, migration and colonialisation, mixed marriages and other global and private reasons, people have had been compelled to use more than one language in their daily life, independent of their geographical location and of the times they lived in.

According to recent data, there are about 6000 languages in the world, most of which are used not only as first, but also as second languages by their speakers (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 8). 43% of world's population are bilinguals, which is more than monolinguals (40%). Interestingly enough, 13% of world's population are trilingual, 3% - speak more than 4 languages and 1% - speak more than 5 languages ("Multilingual languages", 2020).

Speaking about bi- and multilingualism, it is important to mention a relatively new, but already thoroughly investigated topic of heritage speakers, that is the speakers that have more than one native language. Fishman (2001) identifies three groups of heritage speakers: those using colonial, indigenous and immigrant languages (as cited in Benmamoun et al., 2013a, p. 4). I will concentrate on the immigrant heritage speakers.

Heritage language represents an intriguing phenomenon for scholars, because it combines a common structure in its baseline language with new language patterns, which are present only in the heritage language. Therefore, for instance, Russian spoken in Russia and in the Russian-speaking parts of countries of the former USSR is not equal to the Russian spoken by the speakers born and grown up abroad. This peculiarity has different reasons. Heritage speakers grow up with restricted exposure to their home language. Their communication in the minority language is limited to family members and immediate community. That is why, the language that heritage speakers acquire as their second becomes their primary language and their first language becomes their secondary.

3.2. Heritage Speakers: Terminology Problems.

To begin with, the very definition of a heritage speaker represents a problem for linguists. Most authors accept the so-called narrow conception of this term, according to which only the bilingual speakers, who are to some degree proficient both in their home language, that is the minority language, and in the dominant language of the country they live in, can be called heritage (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 369). To remark, the broad definition of the speakers in question also includes those immigrant children who master their first language only passively. They can understand the language to some degree, but do not use it themselves. Generally, heritage speakers are individuals who either immigrated in their early childhood with their family to some foreign country or were born in the family of immigrants. All in all, I consider Polinsky's (2008a) definition of heritage speakers to be the most exact: "An incomplete learner or heritage speaker of language A is an individual who grew up speaking (or only hearing) A as his/her first language but for whom A was then replaced by another language as dominant and primary" (p. 40).

Numerous terms are used to define heritage language and heritage speaker. These terms deal with different aspects of the phenomena under consideration. Heritage language can be called

- first language (because of the order of acquisition),
 - native language or mother tongue,
 - family language (because of the main source of the language),
 - minority language (because of the social status of the language),
 - primary language (if it is the dominant language of a speaker, which is seldom) and secondary language (if it is not the dominant language of a speaker)
- and others.

All these terms are used in this thesis, the term *heritage* being most frequent.

Opposite to heritage language is the phenomenon of the dominant language, which can be found under the names of

- majority language (because of the social status of the language),
 - second language (because of the order of acquisition),
 - primary language,
- others.

Importantly, the terms of primary or dominant language are not always correct. There are rare cases when heritage speakers master their heritage language as the primary/dominant one. Moreover, the majority language can be third or even fourth language

that the speaker acquires. In this case, the term second language is incorrect. All in all, heritage language is a diverse phenomenon and should be accounted for individually.

Polinsky (2006) differentiates between Full Russian and Contemporary Standard Russian (p. 195). Full Russian is a broader term, which includes all varieties of the Russian language in the societies where it is the dominant language, whereas Contemporary Standard Russian is a narrower term referring to the official Russian language, taught at school. Among Russian immigrants in the USA, Polinsky distinguishes the so called *emigré* Russian, the language of the first generation speakers, which is their first and remains their primary language. As an aside, the term *emigré languages* has become popular among many linguists studying heritage languages. By contrast, American Russian is the language of heritage speakers, that is their first language, which has undergone structural changes and has become their secondary language (Polinsky, 2007, p. 176).

The majority of scholars considers heritage language to be the native language of a speaker. Whether a heritage speaker should be considered native speaker or not is the matter of the definition of a native speaker. The problem of defining a native speaker has been under debate for a long time. Native speakers recognize each other by means of perfect pronunciation and language structure. Scholars differentiate the following features of a native speaker: subconscious knowledge of rules, intuitive grasp of meanings, ability to communicate within social settings, range of language skills, creativity of language use (cf. Polinsky, 2007; Kupisch & Rothman, 2018). All of them can to some degree be applied to heritage speakers. This makes heritage languages such an intriguing phenomenon to study: native and foreign language come together in a heritage language. Native speakers are known to acquire the language fully and correctly, whereas in the case of heritage speakers we deal with native speakers with the so-called “incomplete” language acquisition.

Let me pay attention to the term “incomplete”, because it caused discontent in the latest research papers. Kupisch and Rothman (2018) agree with the majority of scholars in that heritage speakers can be called native speakers. However, according to these scholars, they are “native speakers of their heritage language” and not of the baseline language (Kupisch & Rothman, 2018, p. 574). Similarly to German and English, which represent two different languages, none of which can be somehow incomplete in comparison to another, the grammar of any heritage language cannot be incomplete in comparison to some other grammar system. The scholars define completeness of the grammar system “on the basis of whether grammars abide by the universal rules of natural language formation” and on its sufficient development for communicative purposes (Kupisch and Rothman, 2018, p. 574). Therefore, they consider the term “incomplete” regarding heritage grammar to be a mistake

(Kupisch and Rothman, 2018, p. 574). Kupisch and Rothman (2018) offer another notion to refer to heritage grammar if compared to the baseline, which is “differential” (p. 579).

Similarly, Montrul (2012) calls heritage speakers „interrupted“ native speakers and explains her word choice by the fact that heritage speakers retain a great deal of native abilities, but their competence in heritage language is comparable with second language learners (p. 30). In this thesis I will follow Benmamoun, et. al. (2010) and Polinsky (2011b) and refer to heritage grammar as “divergent” rather than “incomplete”.

Accordingly, heritage languages are not equal to the correlated standard languages, but have their own particular language structure. Moreover, it is important to mention that the baseline language for heritage speakers is not the standard variant of a language, which is the baseline for monolinguals. The reason for this is the following. Usually, heritage speakers lack formal schooling in their first language. Their exposure to the language is restricted to their home and immediate community (Polinsky, 2008b, p. 264). The language of this community changes under the influence of the majority language. Although the native language of the first generation immigrants remains target-like at first sight, there are slight differences in all language levels: phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantics, pragmatics and syntax. Some parents use the dialect of the language of their home country. Most first generation immigrants are not consistent in their language use and mix their native language with the majority language, which has a negative influence on the language of heritage speakers. It confuses and demotivates them.

Sometimes, heritage speakers grow up in bilingual families, in which one of the parents is a native speaker of the majority language. Such heritage speakers are called simultaneous bilinguals, because they acquire two languages from birth. Simultaneous bilinguals should be differentiated from sequential bilinguals, that is those speakers, who start the acquisition of the second language after the critical period of language acquisition (Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 9-11, p. 44). The exact age range, when children have to start the acquisition of a second language, in order to be defined as heritage speakers, has not yet been established by linguists and in the works of different scholars varies between the day of birth and puberty. However, an absolute majority of scholars share the opinion that the critical age for the acquisition of a language as native is three (or a bit later) and therefore heritage speakers who contacted the majority language before this age can be called simultaneous bilinguals (for example, Klassert et al., 2014, p. 74; Montrul, 2005, p. 199; Gagarina, 2011, p. 139). In this thesis I will also follow this opinion. Montrul (2008) assumes that simultaneous bilingual children tend to master their heritage language worse than sequential bilinguals, because the majority language hinders the acquisition of heritage language from the very beginning

(p. 514). Although, depending on different factors described later in this chapter, there can be exceptions. Sooner or later, however, children prefer the majority language to their first one, because it is generally recognised and serves their communication and professional goals. Their proficiency in heritage language differs greatly.

3.3. Language Proficiency of Heritage Speakers.

Polinsky and Kagan (2007) draw a parallel between language proficiency of heritage speakers and of creole speakers. Let me define creole language first. Creole languages are simplified natural languages which have developed from several languages within a particular community of people, who do not share one specific language, and have been learned later on by a generation of children as their first language (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, p. 375). Based on the distance of the creole variety from the baseline, creole speakers can be classified into three groups: acrolectal speakers are the closest to the speakers of the baseline language, basilectal group, by contrast, is the most remote from the baseline, whereas mesolectal speakers are somewhere in-between the above-mentioned groups. Similarly, heritage speakers can be subdivided into highly proficient or near native speakers (acrolectal), low-level speakers (basilectal) and the intermediate group (mesolectal) (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007, pp. 371-372). Thus, heritage speakers can be classified according to their language proficiency.

The proficiency of heritage speakers can be determined by different factors. The most important of them are language input, language exposure and motivation. Mitrofanova et al. (2018) point out some additional factors: the presence of siblings and birth order, language status and language prestige, literacy and literacy-related activities (p. 4). These and other factors can be stimulated by political and economic situation, religious beliefs, educational experiences, occupational/social advantages, personal interests. All in all, heritage language proficiency should be treated individually, because of the complexity and variety of the phenomenon of heritage languages.

Linguists usually agree that the most important factors for language proficiency are the quantity and quality of language input as well as the age of language exposure. The role of input in the acquisition of heritage languages has been discussed by numerous linguistics, who deal with heritage languages. However, there is still no single opinion to this problem. Most scholars can be subdivided into two big schools. The followers of Universal Grammar (for example, Chomsky, 1965; Pesetsky, 1999; Pinker, 1994 and others) consider that input

does not loom large in language acquisition (as cited in Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 3). Conversely, another group of scholars (for example, Elman et al., 1996; Tomasello, 2003 and others) supports the idea of the chief role of input frequency (as cited in Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 3).

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to differentiate between input frequency or quantity of input and input quality. The quality of input depends on the language variety/varieties, a heritage speaker is exposed to, and can vary depending on different circumstances, such as, for example, language setting and language surrounding (Benmamoun et al., 2013a, p. 282). The longer the exposure to the first language is, the higher is the level of its proficiency by a heritage speaker (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 23). Besides, longer language exposure means greater language input (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 23). Thus, the definitions of “language exposure” and “language input” are closely related.

It follows from the above consideration that heritage speakers who were born in a foreign country or moved there with their parents at their very early childhood have less chances to master their first language target-like. Nevertheless, it is not impossible. In the families where parents are aware of the possible language loss and take measures to prevent it, children usually master two or more languages without difficulties. They regularly visit the country they and their parents come from, have friends and communities where they use their first language and/or attend language courses to improve their home language. Some motivated and accurate simultaneous bilinguals are highly proficient in their heritage language and are difficult to differentiate from monolinguals. However, most heritage speakers use their first language only within their families and/or with some friends. Some of them respond to their parents or other relatives in the majority language, others use heritage language with their parents and grandparents, switching to the majority language when talking to their brothers and sisters.

One of the strongest driving forces in language acquisition is motivation. Depending on the final goal of language use and the strength of the desire to master a language, heritage speakers can achieve different levels of proficiency. Some very motivated heritage speakers become highly proficient and literate even without formal instructions through self-learning. On the other hand, there are cases when speakers whose language knowledge is very weak because of the insufficient motivation. The example of Rodina and Westergaard (2013a) is of interest here. In one of their studies on gender acquisition, the scholars demonstrate that heritage speakers have problems even in the majority language of their country of residence (Rodina and Westergaard, 2013a). Among other things, it depends on their motivation in

language learning and/or their exposure to the language is insufficient, especially if the gender system of the majority language is not transparent.

3.4. Language transfer. Code-Switching.

Another reason for the uniqueness of heritage languages is language transfer: the majority language influences and changes the first language of a speaker. For example, Benmamoun et al. (2010) suggest that Russian heritage speakers in the USA tend to lose nominal and verbal inflectional morphology in their home language under the influence of the morphologically poor English (p. 5). Furthermore, Russian heritage speakers in the USA have problems with the flexible word-order in Russian and tend to use SVO constructions under the influence of the dominant language English (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 52).

Language transfer is to some degree connected with the categories of language input and language exposure. Indeed, heritage speakers who use their first language rarely in their life, have more problems with the language and therefore they have greater influence of the majority language.

Sometimes, it is not the language contact that changes language structure, but the universal or individual processes of language simplification. Heritage speakers are likely to generalize some particular language phenomenon and to apply it to numerous language structures, often incorrectly. Polinsky and Kagan (2007) call this phenomenon “over regularization” (p. 378). They give an example: low-level Russian heritage speakers in the USA tend to use the suffix *-yva-* with all imperfective verb forms, whereas this suffix is very seldom used in standard Russian (Polinsky, 2008b, p. 270). Over regularisation is the result of the fossilization of a home language after a child starts to use a majority language more often and the development of the first language stops (Polinsky & Kagan 2007, p. 380).

Daily use of more than one language often leads to the mixing of language codes, known as code-switching. Code-switching is a phenomenon typical of heritage speakers, who can combine two languages in one utterance without a problem. Benmamoun et al. (2010) describe code-switching as the result of language contact, in which the speaker combines two languages or language varieties in one discourse segment, when speaking heritage language (p. 41).

Code-switching can be word-internal (see example 1), or within a phrase (see example 2).

(1) This is an example of the word-internal code-switching:

Russian-German bilinguals often combine the stem of the German word *anmeld-en* “to register” and the Russian verb inflections *ova-t’-sja*. Verb.Inf.Refl. and become the mixed word *anmeld-ovat’sja* “to register”.

(2) Below is an example of the code-switching within a phrase:

Russian heritage speakers in Germany tend to use German words in Russian phrases: *Jugendamt (German) opjat’ otkazalsja oplat’ivat’ Kidergarten (German)*.
“The youth welfare office has declined to pay for the kindergarten”

Code-switching and its mechanisms are heatedly debated among linguists. According to the minimalist Distributed Morphology approach which I will follow in my thesis, heritage speakers have more vocabulary items to realize syntactic structures than monolinguals, because they master more than one language target-like. Therefore they have more opportunities to combine lexical items into syntactic structures. Alexiadou and Lohndal (2018) explain code-switching by the fact that multilingual speakers can produce their speech either in a monolingual or in a bilingual mode. In the bilingual mode, code-switching takes place. In the monolingual mode, alternative realizations of utterances are blocked and there is no code-switching (p. 11). Remarkably, more and more scholars consider code-switching not the weakness of heritage speakers, but their benefit. A speaker needs high degree of language proficiency, in order to combine two different morpho-phonological and/or morpho-syntactical systems (see, for example, Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 42).

As the result of code-switching, new language patterns develop within heritage languages under different influences. The so-called Russlish, Spanglish, Türkendeutsch are some extreme examples of this development. Unfortunately, this puzzling phenomenon is still under-researched.

3.5. Language Attrition and Incomplete Acquisition.

Beside language transfer, there are other important reasons for language change, such as language loss and incomplete acquisition. Language attrition or language loss means that a speaker has acquired some particular language structure in early life, but has then lost it due to the lack of use. If a speaker has serious problems with his/her heritage language, one can speak about strong attrition or language erosion that is permanent restructuring of language system, loss of previously available language information. Language erosion usually affects early bilinguals and is not common for the first generation immigrants (Anstatt,

2014). Benmamoun et al. (2010) give an interesting example of language attrition. They suggest that low-level heritage Russian speakers have difficulties using relative clauses because of the language attrition. This language structure should have been acquired by the age of four. The interruption of the language acquisition leads to the loss of this language construction (p. 48).

The principles of language attrition are still under debate. However, most of linguists adopt Jakobson regression hypothesis. According to it, language loss mirrors language acquisition, that is language skills acquired first will be lost last and the other way around (Schmid, M. et al., 2004, p. 1). Gagarina (2011) suggests one more interesting hypothesis about attrition: the more quickly a certain feature is learned, the longer it will be used, the less is the possibility to lose it (p. 140). Moreover, the linguist differentiates two types of factors, which facilitate language attrition: macroscopic extralinguistic factors (such as input, parental occupation, attitudes, identity, schooling and others) and microscopic (internal) factors (these are manifested in language domains such as phonetics and phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, pragmatics and are induced by universal principles or by internal grammar system of a particular language) (Gagarina, 2011, p. 140; Polinsky, 2006, p. 254).

Language attrition is differentiated from incomplete acquisition. Polinsky (1995b) clearly defines forgetters or attriters, those who acquired some linguistic structures and then lost it, from incomplete learners, those whose language acquisition was interrupted through immigration or other factors. Polinsky does not find big differences in the language divergence between these two groups. However, she notices that forgetters present better result in acceptability judgement tasks, which test the competence of the speakers, whereas the production of the two groups is rather similar (Polinsky, 1995b, pp. 117-119).

The term incomplete acquisition implies that a particular language structure has never been acquired because of limited language input. This is the opposite phenomenon to the complete or full language acquisition which is typical for monolinguals. Benmamoun et al. (2010) consider the individual's grammar to be incomplete if the "age-appropriate linguistic levels of proficiency as compared with the grammar of monolinguals or fluent bilingual speakers of the same age, cognitive development, and social group" has not been reached (p. 44). For instance, Russian heritage speakers have problems with gender agreement of feminine nouns ending in a palatalized consonant (not a vowel, which is more typical for Russian) such as *ночь* "night". This language structure is acquired by the age of seven, so that monolingual pre-school children also have problems with it (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 45). However, sooner or later monolinguals acquire the words and agree them correctly,

whereas heritage language acquisition is interrupted, resulting in further problems with the above-mentioned feminine nouns.

It is not always easy to separate incomplete acquisition and language attrition and to determine which category implicated the avoidance of a particular language structure by a heritage speaker. Generally, thorough longitudinal studies are required in order to find out why some definite grammar restructuring takes place. Such studies are very broad and are seldom conducted.

3.6. Peculiarities of Heritage Languages.

Benmamoun et al. (2010) consider peculiarities of heritage languages and come to the following conclusions. Most of heritage speakers are target-like in phonetics and phonology. Pronunciation is a definite advantage of the speakers under consideration (pp. 26-43).

Vocabulary knowledge of heritage speakers vary greatly and depends much on frequency of use and language exposure. Interestingly enough, Benmamoun et al. determine the correlation between lexical knowledge and morphosyntactic attrition (morphosyntax) of heritage speakers. The linguists prove that the better the vocabulary knowledge of the speaker is, the better is his/her use of morphosyntactic constructions (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 28).

Morphology is proved to be the most problematic area for heritage speakers, especially for languages with well-defined inflectional morphology. According to Polinsky (2011b), functional morphology is more difficult for a learner than syntax and semantics (p. 323). Speakers who have little problems in syntax or semantics, are still inaccurate with morphological endings. By the way, noun morphology seems to have more deficits than verb morphology.

Syntax seems to be much easier for heritage speakers. Most heritage speakers acquire at least the basic syntactical structure almost completely. Some difficulties have been determined in the establishing of syntactic dependencies, especially between the “items that are at a distance” such as agreement dependencies, anaphors, argument displacement, extraction, word-order (Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 34-40).

On the whole, heritage speakers can achieve target-like proficiency in their heritage language, phonetics and syntax being the simplest language domains to acquire. Nevertheless, heritage speakers diverge from monolinguals and tend to “phonological neutralization, lexical restriction, simplification, overregulization of complex morphological

patterns, restricted word-order” and in this way develop their own grammatical system (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 42).

3.7. Russian as a Heritage Language in Germany.

The field of heritage languages is a very broad topic. Researchers study different language phenomena and structures, depending on the level of heritage speakers' proficiency and the languages they deal with. I will consider the peculiarities of Russian heritage language in Germany in this thesis. Much attention has been paid to Russian as a heritage language in the USA. Yet, the investigation of heritage Russian in other countries has not been considered much, despite the high immigration rate of Russian people into the West European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the growing number of Russian heritage speakers in these countries as a consequence. Germany is one of these countries. According to Anstatt (2008), Russian has become one of the most widespread spoken migrant languages in general and the most widespread Slavic language in Germany (p. 4). It counts about five million speakers and this number is growing. Most of Russian-speaking immigrants are ethnic Germans (about 4,5 millions). About 200000 are Russian-speaking Jews (Gagarina, 2011, p. 137). Other groups of Russian-speaking immigrants include students, workers, those who marry German citizens, refugees. As is typical of heritage speakers, Russian second generation immigrants in Germany represent a very diverse group. Their language competence and cultural awareness vary greatly.

Let me briefly present the main characteristics of the Russian language in Germany. Russian heritage speakers have little problems with pronunciation and syntax, as heritage speakers usually do (Benmamoun et al. 2010, pp. 26-28). However, they often have problems with vocabulary and tend to code-switch. As expected, morphology represents the biggest problem for heritage Russian speakers. Laleko (2010c) has summarized the main types of grammar restructuring in heritage Russian in the USA (pp. 44-89). She considers that gender (two- instead of three-gender system), case (two- instead of six-case system), number agreement, the use of prepositions, subjunctive mood and the insertion versus omission of overt determiners are the most problematic cases for heritage Russian speakers in question. Whether all these problems are also characteristic of the heritage Russian speaker in Germany has not been clarified by now. However, similar tendencies are expected.

3.8. The Importance of the Studies on Heritage Languages.

More and more scholars do their research on heritage languages, because this topic offers a fertile field for linguistic research. Interestingly enough, up to the 1960s the phenomenon of heritage languages was negatively estimated. It was considered to disturb the normal development of the majority language as well as the cognitive abilities of heritage speakers. However, thanks to new research data this opinion is changing radically. Since 1960s, bi- and multilingualism has been approved and supported in all fields of activity.

Unfortunately, sometimes heritage speakers have to deal with the wrong understanding of bi- and multilingualism. For example, their language proficiency in the majority language and their readiness for school are still tested in the same way as the language proficiency of monolingual children, although there are studies, which prove that bilingual children need a different approach to test their language abilities (Gagarina, 2016, p. 313). Similarly, heritage speakers, who attend language courses in their first language, are taught in the same way as second language learners, although their language competence and motivation for language learning usually differ from those of foreign language learners (Kagan, 2010, p. 225; Bergman, 2014). Truly, it has been shown that heritage speakers achieve better results through comparative studies, through work with different languages and different language levels at the same time, rather than learning every grammatical phenomenon and the rules of its use step by step (Wu, 2010, p. 25). More than that, there is still the opinion that bi- and multilingualism has a negative influence on the acquisition of majority language. Linguists react against these rumours, claiming that the use of heritage language at home and in the immediate community increases the proficiency of this language much and has no negative influence on the development of the majority language (Klassert & Gagarina, 2010, pp. 413-414).

Nonetheless, bi- and multilingualism has more allies than opponents in the modern times (Kupisch & Rothman, 2018, p. 566; Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 100). There is a widely held belief that bi- and multilingualism gives the speakers personal and social benefits. It can help in integration processes as well as in establishing connections with definite human groups. Benmamoun et al. (2010) call language “a powerful social tool” for good reason (p. 3). Bi- and multilingualism helps to develop intercultural competence and at the same time to preserve personal identity and family ties. Besides, many linguists (Anstatt, 2008; Gagarina, 2013 and others) underline cognitive advantages of having more than one native language: better abilities in multitasking, in solving learning tasks, in remembering things, prevention of Alzheimer and others.

The in-depth research of heritage languages make a contribution towards various important spheres of life. First of all, it is important for theoretical linguistics, because it contributes to the research of the main principles of language structure, of language capacity of a human and of language acquisition (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Benmamoun et al., 2010). Polinsky (2008a) and Benmamoun et al. (2010) compare heritage language to children's language because of its simplicity and clearness. Truly, heritage language, just like children's language, is almost free from social influence, external factors, aesthetic values and irregularities. Therefore, it represents the "minimalist architecture" of language with consistent structure, based on the general language principles (Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 54-55; Benmamoun et al., 2013a, p. 17). Besides, heritage language acquisition is – citing Benmamoun et al. (2010) - "a fully systematic and internally rule-governed" process, so that its study can be very helpful for the study of the principles of language acquisition (p. 67). Moreover, heritage speakers are much easier to test than children, because they are usually very motivated and cooperative and therefore useful participants for linguistic investigations (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 54).

Heritage speakers can bring benefits not only for themselves and for their immediate community, but also for the state they live in. Good knowledge of a heritage language can be important for the intercultural competence of people living in immigration and therefore also for the international policy of the new homeland of these people (Kagan, 2010, p. 215). Indeed, heritage speakers understand intercultural parallels and differences very well, which can be used for solving international problems and conflicts. They can make perfect translation without a thorough training. All in all, they can bring many advantages for country's international economy and national security. According to Kagan (2010), second language learners would need several years to accomplish the same volume of language material, for which heritage speakers would need several weeks (p. 219). Numerous tests prove that early language acquisition in a naturalistic setting have advantages if compared to foreign language learners (Montrul, 2012; Laleko, 2019). That is why it is important to look after the development of heritage languages.

3.9. Conclusion.

In order to benefit from heritage language speakers most, wide-ranging studies on this phenomenon are needed. Different aspects of heritage languages should be taken into account. This thesis concentrates on the advanced heritage speakers of Russian in Germany. It follows from the above that heritage speakers can achieve the target-like

proficiency in their heritage language, although some divergences are possible. In spite of the intense and thorough investigation of heritage languages, many questions remain unanswered or under debate. Some of these questions concern the use of the grammatical gender, which I chose to be the topic of my thesis. Russian grammatical gender is a complicated and diverse language category and therefore it represents a special interest for research.

Chapter 4. Previous Studies.

4.1. Introduction.

In the light of the above-considered linguistic phenomena, there is one important and inevitable logical conclusion: the investigation of heritage speakers from the point of view of theoretical linguistics is relevant not only for the better understanding of the principles of language structure, but also for the achievement of the overall recognition of the benefits that heritage speakers bring. Likewise, the mechanisms of the use of the category of grammatical gender continue to attract attention of more and more scholars. In the languages, where grammatical gender is well-defined, such as Russian, the study of gender assignment and gender agreement contributes to the better understanding of language structure on different levels. According to Polinsky (2008a), “noun categorization provides a window onto both lexical access and sentence processing” (p. 3). As Russian has a very diverse and pronounced gender system, it has won the attention of linguists all over the world. Certainly, the peculiarities of this category in heritage Russian have not been ignored.

Although the topic of gender category in heritage languages is relatively new, many interesting investigations all over the world have been done on it. The description of most of these studies goes beyond the scope of this work. I will concentrate on the research, most important for the understanding of the main ideas of the thesis. For the sake of convenience, I have subdivided this chapter into two big parts. The first part is dedicated to the research of grammatical gender in the Russian language of English-Russian bilinguals in the USA. The second part deals with the research of Norwegian scholars on grammatical gender in Russian and in Norwegian.

4.2. American Scholars on Gender in Heritage Russian.

American scholars were among the first who started the research on heritage languages. Their investigations on heritage Russian play an important role in theoretical linguistics. I will concentrate on the studies dealing with the Russian grammatical gender in heritage language acquisition.

4.2.1. The Use of Gender by Low-Level Heritage Speakers. Gender Restructuring. The Study of Polinsky (2008a).

Polinsky's studies (1995a; 1995b; 2006; 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2011a; 2011b, others) on heritage Russian are well-known in the linguistic theory. Indeed, the linguist has made a significant contribution to the study of heritage languages. Many of her investigations have been conducted with the low-level Russian heritage speakers living in the USA. Surely, Polinsky could not neglect such an intriguing topic as grammatical gender in heritage languages.

To begin with, let me point out some of Polinsky's general ideas, which are relevant to the investigation of gender as well as other grammatical categories.

Firstly, Polinsky (2006) determines the correlation between lexical and morpho-syntactic attrition of heritage speakers (p. 249), which has been proven in some of her investigations (studies on relative clauses, grammatical aspect, gender, others). According to Polinsky (2006), the lower the lexical proficiency of a heritage speaker, the worse is his grammatical language knowledge and the more is the deviation from full Russian (p. 249). In particular, Polinsky (2006) notices that the participants of her studies who showed the worst results in grammatical tests, were also the worst in vocabulary tests and speech rate tasks and vice versa.

Next, Polinsky supports the idea of Benmamoun et al.'s (2010) that functional morphology is more difficult for a heritage speaker than syntax and semantics (as cited in Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 30-33). In some of her works, the linguist proves that heritage speakers can have performance errors because of weak morphology, in spite of the competence in syntax and semantics. Moreover, the linguist concludes that "what starts out as a performance error eventually becomes the essence of the mental representation of a language", stimulating language restructuring (Polinsky, 2011b, p. 323). By the way, Benmamoun et al. (2010) argue that noun morphology has more deficits in heritage languages than verb morphology. Really, their results show that verb production is easier and more accurate than noun production for heritage speakers (p. 29). For example, low-level Russian heritage speakers "have an error rate of about 40% in their nominal morphology, and fewer than 20% in their verb agreement morphology" (Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 31-32). As follows, the possibility of errors in gender agreement is relatively high and therefore this subject matter is very interesting for linguistic research.

Polinsky (2008a) conducted an interesting study on gender assignment with the low-level heritage speakers of Russian in the USA. According to the scholar, low-level heritage

speakers preserve the category of gender, although this category undergoes distinct restructuring. Polinsky (2008a) carried out two experiments in order to determine gender restructuring and to distinguish if this restructuring is the result of the on-line production only or whether the comprehension is also affected. Production was tested with the help of the first task, which was to agree an adjective with a noun, depending on its gender. Comprehension could be checked by means of the second experiment, that is a grammaticality judgement task. However, both experiments showed similar results.

Polinsky's participants had fewest errors with masculine nouns and feminine nouns ending in a vowel. The most problematic noun classes for English-Russian bilinguals appeared to be stem-stressed neuters and feminine nouns ending in a palatalised consonant (Polinsky, 2008a, p. 14). Interestingly enough, the same problems are present in monolingual language acquisition at the pre-school age (Polinsky, 2008a, p. 16). Stem-stressed neuters such as *koryt-o* "trough", *slóv-o* "word", *dólot-o* "chisel" and many others end in the vowel -e or -o, the same as end-stressed neuters. If the final vowel is unstressed like in the examples above, then it is reduced and resembles the English schwa. Low-proficiency speakers tend to treat these nouns as feminine, because of the fact that most Russian nouns ending in a vowel are feminine. By contrast, feminines ending in a palatalised consonant such as *noč'* "night", *sut'* "essence", *reč'* "speech" and others formally resemble masculine nouns, most of which end in a consonant. Consequently, it is the formal criteria that confuse the speakers. Importantly, monolingual controls had no problems with the above-mentioned noun classes and treated the nouns according to the rules of standard Russian.

Polinsky (2008a) found out that low-level heritage speakers can be subdivided into two groups depending on the level of restructuring of their gender system. By the way, the participant's level of grammatical restructuring correlates with their speech rate and therefore with their lexical access and construction of the clause (Polinsky, 2008a, p. 19). This supports the hypothesis of the correlation of lexical and grammatical proficiency, mentioned above.

The first group of Polinsky's (2008a) participants is the group of the so called *more proficient speakers*. Their speech rate is higher and their grammatical proficiency is closer to monolinguals. Although the participants of this group have problems with the above-mentioned noun classes, they preserve the three-gender-system in their heritage language. Nevertheless, their gender system is re-interpreted and can be represented as below (Polinsky, 2018, p. 20):

Three gender system of Polinsky's participants:

- a. nouns ending in a consonant are masculine,
- b. nouns ending in a stressed -o are neuter,
- c. all other nouns are feminine.

The second group, whose speech rate was lower, has lost the three-gender system in Russian and then simplified gender assignment process as it is shown below.

Two-gender system of Polinsky's participants (Polinsky, 2018, p. 20):

- a. nouns ending in a consonant are masculine,
- b. nouns ending in a vowel are feminine.

The most important difference between the two groups is the preservation versus the loss of the class of neuter nouns. To be precise, they reinterpret the end-stressed neuters in a different way: one group considers them to be an extra noun class, whereas the other group refers these nouns to the feminine class.

Polinsky (2008a) considers the loss of declension classes to be the main reason for gender restructuring. As previously mentioned in chapter 2, gender assignment rules depend on the declension class of the noun (Corbett, 1982). The declension system in Russian is complicated and represents a challenge for the acquisition of nouns in the conditions of interrupted language acquisition. Polinsky has already proven that Russian heritage speakers tend to lose declension classes in her previous works (for example, Polinsky, 2006, p. 221; Polinsky, 1995a, p. 382; Polinsky, 1995b, p. 95). She asserts that the low-level heritage speakers of Russian in the USA have a two-case noun system, instead of the six-case noun system in the baseline language. Hence, the declension class of heritage speakers in question undergoes restructuring, which definitely has an impact on the gender system of heritage Russian.

To return to the analogy of heritage speakers and monolingual pre-school children, Polinsky (2008a) ascertains that although children have problems with the same noun classes as heritage speakers while requiring gender category, these two types of speakers meet different challenges. The children in question integrate stem-stressed neuters not only with feminine nouns as heritage speakers do, but also with masculine nouns by means of the deletion of final vowel (Polinsky, 2008a, p. 17). So, the gender system of heritage speakers is not "the result of fossilizing of" their first language (Polinsky, 2008a, p. 17), but a new way of interpreting gender information. The nature of this language restructuring is, according to Polinsky (2006), in the principle of "eliminating of opacity" through the strong reliance on

simplified formal cues (p. 224). Polinsky (2006) compares her results with the studies on Australian Russian by Kouzmin (1973) and Finland Russian by Leisiö (2001), who also determined the processes of the simplification of the morphology of full Russian (as cited in Polinsky, 2006, pp. 224). By the way, the linguist considers the processes of language simplification in many of her works. For example, she notices that gender agreement undergoes simplification in American Polish and American Lithuanian (Polinsky 1995b, pp. 98-99).

Polinsky (2008a) concludes that the gender system of low-level heritage speakers strongly depends on their proficiency. It differs from the gender system of the baseline language, but remains coherent and systematic (p. 2). The loss of the three-gender-system among the low-level speakers of American Russian is the most interesting observation of the linguist.

4.2.2. Language Proficiency of Heritage Speakers. Morpho-Syntax. The Study of Montrul et al. (2008).

One of the colleagues and co-authors of Polinsky is Silvina Montrul, who has conducted numerous studies about Spanish as a heritage language in the USA. In one of her studies, Montrul (Montrul et al., 2008) examines such questions as: Does critical age play a role in language acquisition (Interpretability Hypothesis, No Parameter Setting Hypothesis and others) or is the full access to Universal Grammar possible independently from the age of onset (Full Access Hypothesis, Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis)? Do the errors of second language learners and heritage speakers affect only production (Missing Surface Inflection Hypothesis) or both production and comprehension (Morphological Underspecification Hypothesis)? Do heritage speakers have grammatical advantages if compared to the second language learners? (pp. 504-505).

One of Montrul et al.'s (2008) research focuses considers the use of gender agreement by heritage speakers. Hence, the scholars make an attempt to answer the above-mentioned questions considering gender agreement. Montrul et al. review the position of different authors, Au (2002) et al. being one of them. Au et al. (2002) conducted a study on heritage Spanish in the USA and affirmed that heritage speakers have advantages only in the domain of phonetics and phonology, but do not show better results in morpho-syntax (pp. 241-242). Montrul et al. (2008) contradict this idea.

The scholars conducted three experiments with Spanish heritage speakers and second language learners of Spanish in the USA. They carried out two written noun drop tasks,

which tested the recognition of nouns on the basis of the endings on determiners and adjectives (Experiment 1) and the recognition of the correct gender form of determiners and adjectives on the basis of the endings on nouns (Experiment 2). The third task was the oral production, which was conducted to test the same gender agreement structures. Surprisingly, the heritage speakers tested by Montrul et al. (2008) did not show better results than the second language learners. However, their results were principally different. Heritage speakers showed worse results in written tasks, but were more successful in oral experiments. Montrul et al. (2008) pay attention that oral tasks “are more representative of implicit linguistic knowledge” than written tasks (p. 541). Therefore the authors prove that heritage speakers “have more native-like ability for aspects of morpho-syntax” (Montrul, 2012, p. 18). According to numerous linguists, implicit knowledge develops during the critical period of language acquisition (as cited in Montrul et al., 2008, p. 540). Therefore, the results of Montrul et al.’s (2008) study prove that language comprehension of heritage speakers is more native-like in its nature and that heritage speakers have more chances to master their heritage language target-like, although it depends on many additional factors (such as motivation, language input, language recognition and so on) to a great extend. As the results of Montrul et al.’s (2008) test vary depending on the type of the task, the authors suppose that the errors of their participants are more obvious in production, but not in comprehension (p. 539).

Montrul et al. (2008) raise a question as to if it is possible for second language learners to develop implicit grammatical knowledge and for heritage speakers to reach the level of explicit knowledge similar to that of monolinguals. The authors’ answer to this question is positive. However, they admit that the possibility for success for the second language learners is much lower (Montrul et al., 2008, p. 543).

To conclude, Montrul et al. (2008) compare second language learners and heritage speakers of Spanish in the USA and convincingly demonstrate that heritage speakers have grammatical advantages not only in phonetics and syntax, but also in such a complex language domain as morpho-syntax.

4.2.3. The Role of Majority Language in Gender Acquisition in Heritage Russian. The Study of Schwartz et al. (2014).

An interesting study has been conducted by Mila Schwartz et al. (2014). The linguists compared the differences in the language acquisition of gender agreement of bilingual children in four countries. The authors consider the study of Kupisch et al. (2002) who

investigated gender agreement in the language of French and Italian monolinguals and French-Italian bilinguals. Kupisch et al. (2002) showed that the bilinguals made more agreement errors in French, the language with the more opaque gender assignment system (p. 3). Similarly, Schwartz et al. (2014) assumed that transparency and phonological salience have a significant influence on the acquisition of inflectional morphology and choose Russian as a heritage language for their investigation (p. 2). Indeed, Russian inflectional gender agreement morphology is rather opaque and that is why it is challenging for language learners (Schwartz et al., 2014, p. 2).

The following bilinguals were tested in the study: English-Russian, Finnish-Russian, Hebrew-Russian and German-Russian. All of them were preschool children aged 4-5. As is known, English and Finnish are grammatically genderless languages, Hebrew has two genders (masculine and feminine) and German has three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter). The results of the scholars show no qualitative differences among the participants. All four types of bilinguals as well as the monolingual controls have made the same types of errors (Schwartz et al., 2014, p. 19):

- change of neuter end-unstressed nouns mostly to masculine,
- change of neuter end-stressed nouns mostly to feminine,
- change of feminine nouns ending in a palatalized consonant mostly to masculine,
- change of feminine end-unstressed nouns ending in -a to masculine.

Quantitatively, however, the authors established “the delay in correct production by approximately one year” (Schwartz et al., 2014, p. 20). Moreover, this production differs in the four groups, depending on the majority language. The Russian-English bilinguals made the most errors. The results of Russian-Finnish bilinguals were also weak, but slightly better. Schwartz et al. (2014) explain these weak results with the fact that in both cases the majority language has no grammatical gender (p. 5). The better results of the Russian-Finnish bilinguals could be explained by the sociolinguistic factor (Russian is more present in Finnish education and social life) (Schwartz et al., 2014, p. 21).

Russian-Hebrew and Russian-German bilinguals were better in gender agreement than the above-mentioned groups. Importantly, Russian-German children showed the best results of all four groups, which can be explained by the fact that German has a three-gender system, like Russian. This fact makes Schwartz et al. (2014) conclude that not only the existence of the category of gender, but also gender categorization is important in bilingual development. In the case of Russian-German bilinguals, the presence of the neuter gender in both Russian and German has played the most important role for the gender agreement

acquisition of the participants and had resulted in the highest proficiency level of these speakers.

Hence, two hypotheses have been approved by Schwartz et al. (2014):

- the acquisition of gender depends on its opacity or transparency in the target language;
- the proficiency of gender use depends on the similarity of gender categorization in heritage and in majority language.

4.2.4. Nouns with Ambiguous Gender. The Studies of Laleko (2018, 2019).

Another American linguist, whose study of gender assignment and gender agreement is of importance for the present thesis, is Oksana Laleko. Laleko (2018, 2019) tested advanced heritage speakers of Russian in the USA. The main focus of her investigation concentrates on gender assignment of underspecified and ambiguous animate noun forms (Laleko, 2018, p. 233).

4.2.4.1. Gender Restructuring. The Study of Laleko (2018).

Laleko holds the opposition theory of the Prague school, Roman Jakobson being one of its leaders. This theory was first introduced in phonology, but it soon became well-known in all domains of linguistic theory. The opposition theory presupposes three types of oppositions: privative, equipollent and gradual (Laleko, 2010, pp. 172-174). As gradual oppositions are based on the “degree of the same property” and are not connected with the notion of markedness, Laleko does not consider them in her works (Laleko, 2010, p. 174). Privative binary oppositions involve one member, marked for some feature or property, and one member, unmarked for this feature or property. The marked member usually has a morphological marker and can be used in a more restricted range of contexts. Moreover, sometimes the unmarked member can be used instead of the marked member. This phenomenon is called *contextual neutralization* (Laleko, 2010, p. 175). Below is the example of privative opposition (Example (1)) and of contextual neutralisation (Example (2)) in the Russian gender system:

- (1) *učitel'* (“teacher”, unmarked) – *učitel'-n-ic-a* (“teacher”, marked for feminine feature)

(2) Učitel' vseгда dostoin uvaženija.

Teacher.M/F always worthy.M respect

"Teacher is always worthy of respect"

In the example (2) gender feature is unspecified and therefore both feminine and masculine interpretations are possible.

By contrast, equipollent oppositions are composed of two morphologically independent members, which are logically equivalent and cannot replace each other. As follows, contextual neutralisation cannot be realised (Laleko, 2010, p. 142). Regarding Russian gender, the following example would be obvious:

(3) *brat*.M "brother" versus *sestra*.F "sister"

mal'čik.M "boy" versus *devočka*.F "girl"

In her doctoral thesis, Laleko (2010) considered privative and equipollent oppositions on the example of the grammatical category of aspect in the Russian language (p. 41). The scholar argued that the "privative aspectual opposition – between perfective (marked) and imperfective (unmarked) aspects - of baseline Russian undergoes a process of restructuring into an equipollent opposition by way of reduction and loss of the general-factual functions of the imperfective mediated at the interface between syntax and discourse-pragmatics" (Laleko, 2010, p. 41). In her later studies, the scholar applies the opposition theory to the grammatical gender in Russian.

Laleko (2018) defines Russian grammatical gender system as "a hybrid system" that involves three main factors of gender categorization: lexical, morphological and referential (p. 235).

Lexical gender assignment is sex-differentiable and have fixed agreement patterns. Laleko (2018) considers Russian nouns, similar to those in the example (3), and describes the relation between masculine and feminine lexical gender as equipollent opposition (pp. 237-238). Both members of the opposition are inherently marked for a particular gender.

Morphological gender in Russian is related to declension classes, which are dependent on noun's inflectional paradigms. Laleko (2018) underlines that Russian masculine nouns represent the default noun form that can have specifically masculine and generic interpretation (p. 238). Feminine nouns are derived from the masculine nouns by means of

gender-changing affixes (for example, *monach.M* “monk” → *mona-š-k-a.F* “nun”). Feminine nouns are very seldom used in generic contexts, mostly with some additional negative connotation. On this account, Laleko (2018) considers that feminine and masculine nouns, differentiated via a morphological factor, are in a privative opposition, masculine gender being its unmarked and feminine gender being its marked member.

Last but not least, Laleko (2018) considers varied that is referential gender and conducts a study on it. The scholar compares gender assignment of hybrids and common gender nouns by heritage speakers and by monolingual controls. She uses a fill-the-gap task and tests only one gender agreement context – either adjectival or verbal agreement - at a time in the sentences with a referent in the nominative case.

The results of Laleko’s study (2018) demonstrate the target-like behaviour of heritage speakers in the unambiguous and invariable gender contexts, which include lexical and morphological factors of gender assignment. Both groups of participants – heritage speakers and monolingual controls – are guided by lexical and morphological cues in gender assignment and use them correctly and productively in agreement constructions (p. 253).

However, the situation is not so obvious with nouns with varied gender. First of all, Laleko (2018) distinguishes the difference between the use of paired and unpaired hybrids. As a remark, paired hybrids can refer to masculine (specifically masculine reading) and to feminine (generic reading) nouns, although they have an extra derived feminine form (see example (4) below). Unpaired hybrids lack the derived feminine form and have a generic reading (example 5):

- (4) *učitel’.M/F* “teacher” – *učitel’-nica.F* “teacher”
mašinst.M/F “train operator” – *mašinst-ka.F* “train operator”

- (5) *voditel’.M/F* “driver”
vrač.M/F “doctor”

Heritage speakers demonstrate a strong tendency to masculine agreement pattern with paired hybrids (for example, *krasiv-yj.M učitel’* “a nice teacher”, *učitel’ ušěl.Pst.M* “a teacher went away”). Monolinguals also accepted masculine gender in most examples. Despite this obvious similarity, the results of the two groups differ essentially. Laleko (2018) pays the reader’s attention to the fact that the derived feminine form of paired hybrids has a more restricted meaning if compared to the masculine form. Consequently, paired hybrids and their feminine forms are used asymmetrically and stand in a privative opposition. Laleko (2018)

shows that monolingual controls preserve the status of paired hybrids as a privative opposition, whereas heritage speakers treat paired hybrids differently. Indeed, the control group accepted feminine agreement with paired hybrids in mismatched agreement contexts (for example, *umnaja.F učitel'* “a clever teacher”, *učitel' šla.F* “a teacher was going”) in significantly more examples than they accepted masculine agreement with derived feminine forms (for example, *umnyj.M učitel'-nica* “a clever (woman) teacher”, *učitel'-nica shël.M* “a (woman) teacher was going”) and this difference is statistically significant (p. 256). By contrast, heritage speakers do not show significant difference between agreements in mismatched contexts. They accepted feminine agreement with paired hybrids and masculine agreement with derived feminine forms in the same, symmetrical proportions. On account of this, Laleko (2018) concludes that heritage speakers restructure the feminine – masculine opposition under consideration from privative to equipollent. As is known, masculine and feminine nouns are used equally often in equipollent opposition: the masculine form of a noun has no generic reading and is used only for male referents and the feminine form is used only for female referents. Equipollent oppositions are typical for lexically marked nouns. That is why Laleko (2018) calls this restructuring *lexicalization of hybrids*.

Considering unpaired hybrids, Laleko (2018) ascertains that heritage speakers treat them as masculine and strongly prefer masculine adjectival and verbal agreement. In this way, heritage speakers restructure generic masculine forms of unpaired hybrids into specifically masculine forms (p. 256).

Next, the scholar distinguishes differences in the use of common gender nouns, for which the meaning is purely referential. Whereas monolinguals use masculine and feminine agreement with common gender nouns equally often, heritage speakers rely on morpho-phonological gender cues and treat them as feminine nouns.

Thus, heritage speakers restructure the use of the nouns with unambiguous gender in the following way:

1. Paired hybrids loose generic reading and are treated as specifically masculine.
2. Privative opposition of paired hybrids and derived feminine nouns becomes equipollent.
3. Unpaired hybrids loose generic reading and are treated as specifically masculine.
4. Common gender nouns are treated as feminine nouns.

Laleko discusses the reasons for this language restructuring. She considers the processes of avoiding of extra processing costs to be the driving force for the described changes. Heritage speakers minimize the information carried by hybrids and common gender nouns and avoid the ambiguity. Moreover, they economize a longer referential tracking. By

doing so, they follow the Grice's maxim of quantity, which says that a more informative form is pragmatically more suitable than a less informative one (as cited in Laleko, 2018, p. 257).

4.2.4.2. The Use of Nouns with Ambiguous Gender by Heritage Speakers as Compared to Second Language Learners. The Study of Laleko (2019).

In one of her recent studies, Laleko (2019) compares the gender acquisition of Russian heritage language speakers and of second language learners. She considers nouns, characterized by the non-transparency of gender assignment and gender agreement, which she subdivides into two groups. Nouns referring to males and ending in *-a/-ja* belong to the nouns requiring conflict resolution (Laleko, 2019, pp. 155-157). In this case, the competition between a noun's denotation and its form plays the deciding role. Truly, nouns like *pap-a* ("daddy"), *djad-ja* ("uncle") as well as male names ending in a vowel do not carry the morphological information, necessary for distinguishing their gender category. Laleko (2019) calls these nouns *opaque* (p. 155).

Likewise, Laleko (2019) refers hybrids to the group of nouns, which are affected by the *conflict resolution* problem. However, this problem is realised differently with hybrids. If the above-described nouns represent a conflict between lexical and morphological gender assignment, then hybrids are involved in a conflict between referential and morphological gender assignment rules (Laleko, 2019, pp. 156-157).

According to Laleko's (2019) classification, common gender nouns form an extra group, which is characterised by underspecification (p. 157). This means that the problem of gender assignment with common gender nouns does not necessarily lie in conflict resolution, but in the absence of meaning without a referent (Laleko, 2019, p. 157). As it is generally known, common gender nouns have no inherent gender value. It is important to mention that although hybrids can also be assigned gender referentially, they are generically masculine and consequently cannot be considered to lack any inherent meaning.

The linguist uses filler sentences including gender-concordant and gender-discordant agreement patterns with animate nouns of the following types:

- transparent masculine nouns (like *lev.M* "a lion", *brat.M* "a brother"),
- opaque masculine nouns ending in *-a/-ja* (like *papa.M* "a daddy", *mužčina.M* "a man"),
- transparent lexically feminine nouns (like *mama.F* "a mom", *korova.F* "a cow"),

- transparent morphologically derived feminine nouns (like *hudožni-ca*.F “a painter”),
- hybrid nouns (like *voditel’*.M/F “a driver”),
- common gender nouns (like *kollega*.M/F “a colleague”).

As a result, both heritage language speakers and second language learners demonstrated target-like language behaviour with gender agreement in transparent, non-ambiguous contexts.

As for opaque nouns (masculine nouns ending in a vowel, like *papa*.M “daddy”), second language learners preferred feminine agreement in significantly more contexts than monolinguals. Heritage speakers’ results were closer to monolinguals with adjectival agreement, but at the same time they were closer to second language learners with respect to verbal agreement (Laleko, 2019, p. 166). Laleko (2019) explains this fact by the difficulty “of carrying out long-distance dependencies”, which prevail in verbal agreement (p. 170).

Regarding hybrids, both groups of bilingual participants diverged from monolinguals in their ratings for referential agreement: masculine agreement pattern was strongly preferred. Laleko (2019) considers the strategy of minimizing referential ambiguity of nouns to be the main reason for this difference.

Similarly, both bilingual groups used feminine agreement combinations with common gender nouns, based on the morpho-phonological principle of gender assignment. However, Laleko (2019) makes an important observation in the results of the two groups. She compares the use of masculine agreement with common gender nouns (like *malen’kij*.M *sirota* “a little orphan”, *sirota sel*.M “an orphan sat down”) and masculine agreement with invariably feminine nouns ending in *-a/-ja* (like *malen’kij*.M* *ženščina* “a little* woman”, *ženščina sel*.M* “a woman sat down*”) (p. 169). Importantly, these results prove that second language learners depend greatly on morpho-phonological form of a noun and treat “lexically feminine nouns on par with common gender forms” (Laleko, 2019, p. 169). However, heritage speakers preserve the distinction between invariable (lexically feminine nouns) and ambiguous (common gender nouns) gender contexts and this difference is statistically significant (Laleko, 2019, p. 169). Thus, second language learners reanalyse common gender nouns as lexically feminine, whereas heritage speakers retain the difference between lexical and referential principals in gender assignment. As a logical consequence, Laleko (2019) emphasizes that heritage language speakers have benefits if compared to second language learners: they are more sensitive to the lexical and referential gender factors and are less dependent on the morphological form of a noun.

On this account, Laleko (2019) offers different methods of gender acquisition for heritage speakers. She proposes the explicit form-based instructions at the initial stages of

language learning, following by the learning of lexical gender and lexical-morphological conflict resolution (p. 175). Importantly, hybrids and common gender nouns should be learned last, because referential gender represents the biggest problems for heritage speakers. Considering better results of heritage speakers who are exposed to their heritage language from birth, Laleko (2019) considers input to be one of the most important factors for the acquisition of referential gender and therefore naturalistic learning methods to be the most profitable for these nouns (p. 175).

After all, American linguists made an enormous contribution to the research on Russian grammatical gender and on bilingual language acquisition. They addressed not only the question of language restructuring in the context of limited input, but also the probable reasons of language change.

4.3. Norwegian Linguists' Research on Grammatical Gender.

Numerous Norwegian scholars did their research on grammatical gender. Some of them, such as Yulia Rodina and Marit Westeergaard, investigated the acquisition of this grammatical category by monolingual and bilingual children. However, the issue of gender in heritage language acquisition also played an important role in the works of Norwegian linguists.

4.3.1. Monolingual Acquisition of Nouns with Ambiguous Gender. The Study of Rodina (2008).

The Norwegian linguist Yulia Rodina (2008) conducted a detailed research on the acquisition of Russian gender on the example of the exceptional nouns, which gender cannot be extract from their morphological form and/or from the agreement pattern. These are nouns denoting men and ending in *-a/ -ja*, male proper names ending in *-a/ -ja*, common gender nouns, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrid nouns. In particular, the scholar concentrates on the acquisition of the semantic rule of gender assignment regarding these nouns.

In her doctoral dissertation, Rodina (2008) subdivides the exceptional nouns under consideration (male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, common gender nouns, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, hybrids) into two big groups: nouns in obligatory contexts and

nouns in variable contexts. This difference appears to be crucial for my research. Truly, heritage speakers meet different challenges in these two contexts. One of the reasons for this is the impossibility of mixed agreement patterns in obligatory contexts (there are some exceptions, however). Conversely, mixed agreement is wide-spread in variable contexts. Therefore, I adopted the notions of obligatory and variable contexts from Rodina's (2008) investigation.

Let me now briefly explain the most important differences between the two above-considered notions more concretely. Rodina (2008) counts the following nouns in the group of nouns in obligatory contexts (pp. 87-114):

1. nouns denoting men and ending in *-a/ -ja*: for example, *mužčina* "man"
2. male names ending in *-a/ -ja*: for example, *Vasja*
3. double gender nouns, also called common gender nouns, which refer to males: for example, *umnica* "clear head"

These nouns have the following similarities. They denote male persons, but have morphological forms typical of nouns denoting females. Really, the three classes of nouns belong to the second declension class, representative of female nouns (Corbett, 1982, p. 216). Consequently, these nouns are characterised by form-meaning mismatch, if gender agreement is concerned. Despite this mismatch, the nouns under consideration take stable gender agreement patterns. Their gender agreement is allocated on the basis of meaning only. If one takes a look at nouns, which I refer to the group of nouns in obligatory contexts in my study, it is clear that they should be used with masculine agreement. As a reminder, common gender nouns referring to females take feminine agreement, but they are not the subject of my research.

In this connection, it should be noted that male terms and male names ending in *-a / -ja* differ from common gender nouns in the principles of gender assignment. The former nouns are inherently masculine. Therefore, their gender is assigned semantically or lexically. The latter nouns, that is common gender nouns, take referential gender, as in the examples below:

Example (6).

Malen'k-**a**ja sirota podošl-**a** poblize.

little.F orphan came.F nearer

"The little orphan came nearer"

Example (7).

Malen'k-**ij** sirota podosh-**ël** poblīže.

little.M orphan came.M nearer

"The little orphan came nearer"

So, nouns in obligatory contexts require the resolution of form-meaning mismatch from a speaker. Nevertheless, these nouns take stable agreement patterns, which are semantically motivated. Hence, "the dominance of the semantic rule for these nouns is a categorical requirement" (Rodina, 2008, p. 87).

Yet, there is no rule without exceptions. Rodina (2008) gives some examples of contexts, in which common gender nouns denoting males have feminine agreement, so that syntactic and not semantic gender criterion is involved (p. 9). First and foremost, this is the case of copular constructions such as Rodina's (2008) examples, repeated here below (p. 9):

Example (8).

On - izvestn-**aja** lakomka.

he well-known.F gourmand

"He is a well-known gourmand"

The pronoun in the pre-copular position displays male referent, whereas the adjective, which modifies the common gender noun in the post-copular position has feminine morphological ending.

However, this example concerns itself exclusively with copular constructions, which function as modifiers and do not denote a referent. That is why, similar to Rodina, I claim that the above-given sentences are insignificant for the goals of the present study (Rodina, 2008, p. 11).

Equally insignificant is another of Rodina's (2008) examples, repeated below. In this case, the common gender noun *plaksa* "crybaby" refers to a male referent (pp. 10-11):

Example (9).

Eht-a plaksa revel-a vsju noč'.

This.F crybaby howled.F all night

"This crybaby howled all night."

In fact, Russian native speakers happen to use common gender nouns with morphological gender agreement in colloquial speech. Still, these cases are extremely rare and their use is restricted. Moreover, their grammatical correctness is under debate. So, the discussion of these nouns is of low interest for the purposes of this thesis.

Thus, following Rodina (2008), I refer to nouns denoting men and ending in *-a/ -ja* as well as to common gender nouns as to nouns in obligatory contexts, which are characterised by “consistent agreement patterns that have semantic/referential justification” (p. 18).

Another class of nouns differentiated by Rodina (2008) and adopted for the purposes of this thesis is represented by nouns in variable contexts. Similar to nouns in obligatory contexts, these nouns are characterised by form-meaning conflict, which makes the choice of a gender agreement pattern more complicated. However, nouns in variable contexts have broader variability of agreement patterns, allowing even mixed agreement. These nouns are:

1. hybrids such as *doktor* “doctor”
2. female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* such as *Irčik*

Basically, three agreement patterns are grammatically correct for these nouns: masculine, feminine and mixed. According to Rodina (2008), the choice of one of these patterns depends on socio-cultural peculiarities of the historical epoch of a speaker as well as on his or her age, education level and social circumstances. In brief, socio-cultural factors play a crucial role in the acquisition of nouns in variable contexts and in the agreement choice (Rodina, 2008, p. 55).

In chapter 7, I will pay attention to this topic more explicitly. For now, it is important to stress the fact that nouns in variable contexts allow more than one option of gender agreement. Examples 10 and 11 show this variability.

Example (10).

Hybrids referring to females:

- a. *Molodoj doktor ušel*
young.M doctor went.M

b. Molodaja doktor ušla
young.F doctor went.F

c. Molodoj doktor ušla.
young.M doctor went.F
“Young doctor went away”

Example (11).

Female names ending in -ik/ -ok:

a. molod-**oj** Irčik uš-**ěl**
young.M Irčik went.M

b. Molodaja Irčik ušla
young.F Irčik went.F

c. Molodoj Irčik ušla.
Young.M Irčik went.F
“Young Irčik went away”

The question arises as to whether the greater optionality, that is to say variability, of nouns in variable contexts contributes to the reduction or increase of error-rates in gender agreement. On the one hand, the greater optionality of agreement pattern choice should lead to the avoidance of errors. On the other hand, variability is known to lead to complications in language acquisition and therefore in language use.

Rodina (2008) conducted one main study and several pilot studies for her research. In her main experiment with 25 children between the ages of 2,6 and 4 years, she adopted the Elicited Production Task, focussing on the above-described noun classes. By producing particular sentence structures in the form of a game, children revealed their knowledge of grammar. After a detailed analysis of the results of the study, Rodina (2008) has formulated important and innovative statements.

First of all, the author shows that children acquire gender gradually, proceeding from the acquisition of formal rules of gender assignment to the acquisition of semantic principles of gender assignment. More than that, gender acquisition depends on different factors, one of which is frequency. In this connection Rodina (2008) considers two theories on grammar

acquisition: the Rules and Competition model of Yang (2002) and the Words and Rules model of Pinker (1999) (as cited in Rodina, 2008, pp. 60-66). Both models stress the importance of input frequency for learning process, but describe this process differently. In short, the Words and Rules model predicts that regular morphology is acquired by rules (rule learning process), while irregular morphology is “stored in the mental lexicon” (rote learning process) (as cited in Rodina, 2008, p. 60). The acquisition of irregular morphology takes longer. It starts with the memorizing of mental information, which is generalized and reorganized in rules later on (as cited in Rodina, 2008, p. 61). By contrast, according to the Rules and Competition model, both regular and irregular morphology is acquired by rules. Irregular inflections are acquired by means of the competition for dominance of different rules. The more frequently irregular morphological pattern is used, the easier it can be acquired (as cited in Rodina, 2008, pp. 61-62).

Rodina (2008) supports the idea of Pinker and supplements it. In her opinion, Russian children acquire two types of knowledge: grammatical or cognitive and conceptual or socio-linguistic. Grammatical knowledge is straightforward and is acquired quicker. Conceptual knowledge, which is essential in the acquisition of grammar irregularities, requires extra-linguistic knowledge and needs more time to be acquired adult-like.

Regarding the nouns in obligatory contexts, Rodina (2008) asserts that male terms ending in *-a/ -ja* are challenging for children due to the ambiguity of form and meaning and therefore their acquisition depends greatly on the frequency of use. More frequently used nouns, such as *papa.M* “daddy”, *djadja.M* “an uncle” are acquired quicker than rare male terms, such as *mužčina.M* “a man”, *junoša.M* “a young man” (Rodina, 2008, pp. 99-100). Interestingly, male proper names ending in *-a/ -ja* are easily acquired, independently of their frequency. Rodina (2008) explains this by the fact that proper nouns are characterized by simple semantic representation, because they refer to one particular individual. By the way, if a male term is used with a proper name (for example, *djadja Kolja* “uncle Kolja”), then children tend to treat the word-combination as a proper name and have no difficulties with gender agreement (Rodina, 2008, p. 105). Common gender nouns are the most complicated among the nouns in obligatory contexts. They represent two challenges at the same time: the ability to refer to both male and female depending on the referent and the ambiguity of form and meaning if referring to a male. On the whole, the semantic factor of nouns in obligatory contexts is acquired in several steps. First, children learn semantic information for some frequent nouns. Then they derive the semantic rule out of this information: for example, sex-differentiable nouns denoting males are masculine, sex-differentiable nouns denoting

females are feminine. After that, they generalize this rule and apply it to infrequent nouns (Rodina, 2008, pp. 105-106).

Nouns in variable contexts (female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrids) are even more challenging for a language learner than the nouns in obligatory contexts. These nouns allow mixed agreement patterns, which can confuse an inexperienced speaker. Unlike the nouns in obligatory contexts, the choice of agreement here is not necessarily semantically motivated. In order to use these nouns correctly, a speaker needs to possess conceptual knowledge, which is the “matter of socio-linguistic maturation” and therefore takes more time to acquire (Rodina, 2008, p. 128). Really, Rodina (2008) shows that children acquire mixed gender patterns by the age of 6-7, whereas the agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts is acquired by the age of 3-4 (Rodina, 2008, pp.160-162).

More precisely, Rodina’s participants showed adult-like results with hybrids referring to males, because there is no formal-semantics conflict in the noun patterns. Children’s use of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* changes from the dominance of masculine (formal) agreement to the dominance of feminine (semantic) agreement (Rodina, 2008, pp. 163-164). The most problematic noun class in Rodina’s study appeared to be hybrid nouns referring to females, because of the clear conflict between the form and the meaning of a noun. Thus, the variability of contexts leads to the inconsistency of language input and to the delay of the acquisition of linguistic phenomena.

Rodina (2008) constructs the hypothesis that the children acquire the correct use of the above-described exceptional nouns by means of the gradual replacing of formal factor by the semantic factor with the help of definite semantic cues. These cues are manifested in the target input via agreement information (pp. 162-164). First, children learn that sex differentiations have different grammatical realisations. Then they acquire the knowledge that formal criteria do not always work and that semantic factor also matters (Rodina, 2008, p. 164). Each noun class is acquired separately. Below I provide the semantic cues formulated by Rodina (2008), which are necessary for the acquisition of the nouns in question (p. 166):

- a. [[+male] N-a V-Ø] (for papa-type nouns, male names in *-a*)
- b. [(+male) N-a V-Ø] (for double gender nouns referring to males)
- c. [(–male) N-Ø V-a] (for hybrids referring to females)
- d. [[–male] N-Ø V-a] (for female names in *-ok /-ik*)
- e. [[–male] N-Ø V-Ø] (for female names in *-ok /-ik*)
- f. [(–male) N-a V-a] (for double gender nouns referring to females)

g. [(±male) N-Ø V-Ø] (for hybrids referring to males or females)

To conclude, Rodina's research (2008) shows clearly that "innateness and learning are not contradictory but complementary" in gender acquisition (p. 179). Children orient themselves to the formal grammar cues first, but with time they learn the role of the semantic criterion of gender assignment. Socio-linguistic experience helps them to acquire even the most challenging exceptional noun classes.

4.3.2. Gender in Heritage Russian in Norway. The Study of Rodina and Westergaard (2013b). The Study of Mitrofanova et al. (2018).

The cue-based approach to Russian gender assignment has been successfully applied in Rodina's later studies. Together with Westergaard, Rodina (2013b) conducted an experiment on gender in heritage Russian in Norway. The scholars subdivided the participants of their study into two big groups: speakers who live in families, where both parents speak Russian as their first language, and speakers, who grow up in mixed families, where only one parent is a native speaker of Russian. On the basis of the results of their study, Rodina and Westergaard (2013b) assert that the former group is considerably more proficient in gender, than the latter one, and can even achieve target-like level. For example, in the study in question these participants used both masculine and feminine nouns ending in a palatalised consonant on a par with monolinguals, whereas children with only one Russian-speaking parent used masculine gender as the default and overgeneralized this gender with Russian feminine nouns ending in a palatalised consonant. Interestingly enough, both Russian monolingual children and Norwegian-Russian bilinguals with two Russian-speaking parents overgeneralized feminine gender with opaque neuter nouns ending in an unstressed -o, although the percentage of these errors was not high (12% - 15%) (Rodina & Westergaard, 2013b, p. 118). The bilingual group with only one Russian-speaking parent overgeneralized masculine with all genders. Therefore, the researchers point out that, unlike bilinguals with one Russian-speaking parent, monolinguals and bilinguals with two Russian-speaking parents are sensitive to the gender information presented on nouns, that is to gender cues, and can generalize gender rules out of these cues (Rodina & Westergaard, 2013b, p. 118).

In addition, Rodina and Westergaard (2013b) notice that Norwegian-Russian bilinguals acquire Russian gender system earlier than the Norwegian one. The same is true for Russian and Norwegian monolingual speakers: Russian monolinguals acquire gender earlier

than Norwegian monolinguals. The reason for this difference is in the peculiarities of the two gender systems: Russian gender system is mostly transparent and can be predicted by means of morphological rules (Rodina & Westergaard, 2013b, p. 95). Norwegian gender system is opaque and takes longer to acquire.

In their recent studies, Mitrofanova et al. (2018) come back to the cue-based approach. Using both real and unreal nouns, the linguists show that Norwegian-Russian bilinguals are sensitive to morphological gender cues for Russian gender from a new perspective (Mitrofanova et. al., 2018, p. 1). Considering the outcomes of their study, they argue again that the overgeneralization of masculine gender represents the biggest difficulty for bilinguals, which is mostly expressed in the results of participants with only one Russian-speaking parent. The scholars confirm the results of the earlier studies and conclude that input is one of the main criterion for language proficiency. Besides, they formulate the three most important predictors of language proficiency in heritage Russian if speaker's background is considered: cumulative length of exposure, consistency of input and the presence of older siblings. Moreover, lexical diversity in Russian narratives is considered to be the best proficiency predictor among proficiency measures (Mitrofanova et al., 2018, p. 1, p. 19).

4.3.3. Gender in Heritage Norwegian. The Study of Lohndal and Westergaard (2016).

Some more studies by the Norwegian scholars are of interest for this thesis. Rodina and Westergaard (2015b) conducted a study on grammatical gender in Tromsø dialect in Norwegian and observed the process of language simplification: feminine gender tends to disappear due to low frequency and extensive syncretism in the acquisition process. Thus, a three-gender system (masculine, feminine, neuter) becomes a two-gender-system (common, neuter).

Lohndal and Westergaard (2016) also pay attention to this phenomenon. They explain this restructuring by the influence of socio-linguistic factors (language prestige, language contact) and of the syncretism of masculine and feminine genders.

Lohndal and Westergaard (2016) extend the topic of gender restructuring and consider heritage speakers of Norwegian in the USA, comparing them to heritage Russian speakers.

The scholars analysed the data of 50 speakers in the Corpus of American Norwegian speech (CANS) and came to interesting conclusions.

They formulate three main ideas about grammatical gender in heritage Norwegian. Firstly, unlike the speakers of Tromsø dialect, heritage speakers of Norwegian preserve the three-gender-system of Norwegian language. To remind, Rodina and Westergaard (2015b) described the tendency to lose feminine gender by their participants. Moreover, according to the results of Polinsky's study (2008) on heritage Russian in the USA, low-level heritage speakers lose the neuter gender and restructure Russian gender system from three- to two-gender system. These findings led the Norwegian scholars to the assumption that Norwegian heritage speakers in the USA would also tend to simplify their gender system and to lose its most variable component – feminine gender. However, this assumption was not borne out. The speakers retained all three genders, though did not always use them target-like. The researchers observe a strong overgeneralization of masculine gender forms of indefinite article, which is considered to be the “exponent of gender” in Norwegian (Lohndal and Westergaard, 2016, p. 10). The linguists consider this overgeneralization to be the result of language attrition, which leads to “a general erosion across the whole gender system” and probably to the loss of gender as such (Lohndal and Westergaard, 2016, p. 11).

Secondly, Lohndal and Westergaard (2016) underline that definite inflections on nouns do not mark gender, but mark noun's declension class. The scholars' analysis shows that the speakers used definite suffixes target-consistent, which is not the case with gender markers (for example, indefinite articles). So, they conclude that gender forms “are much more prone to change than declension markers” (Lohndal and Westergaard, 2016, p. 10).

Lastly, the linguists consider the reasons for the strong language restructuring, that is the overgeneralization of masculine, typical for English-Norwegian heritage speakers. Lohndal and Westergaard (2016) believe that the non-transparency of Norwegian gender assignment is the most important reason for this phenomenon. Really, gender of Norwegian nouns should be learnt noun by noun, because the noun form does not give any information about it. Therefore, Norwegian gender is opaque and difficult to acquire. Similar results were discussed by Rodina and Westergaard (2013b) as to Russian and Norwegian monolingual speakers (p. 95).

To sum up, Norwegian scholars conducted many important researches on children's and heritage gender acquisition. The cue-based approach, formulated by Rodina (2008), penetrates through theories of gender acquisition in Russian and Norwegian by monolingual and bilingual speakers.

4.4. Conclusion.

What this all amounts to is that gender in heritage languages is a heatedly debatable topic, which draws the attention of scholars in the whole world. Unfortunately, I am able to present only a small part of scholarly discussions on this exciting issue in the framework of this thesis.

The most important topics of American authors, discussed in this chapter, are dedicated to adult heritage speakers and to their comparison to second language learners. It has been shown that Russian gender morphology has many ambiguous cases, which are challenging for bilingual speakers. Russian heritage speakers with very low level of Russian are characterized by the restructuring of Russian gender system from three- to two-gender system, based on the loss of declension classes. Bilinguals with a higher language level preserve the three Russian gender, but often use them incorrectly (Polinsky, 2008). However, despite the weaker language knowledge, if compared to monolinguals, heritage speakers demonstrate clear advantages in relation to second language learners (Laleko, 2019). Speaking about mixed agreement, heritage speakers have the tendency to avoid ambiguity: they prefer masculine agreement with hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and feminine agreement with nouns denoting males and ending in *-a/ -ja* as well as with common gender nouns. Importantly, all groups of Russian heritage speakers in the USA assign gender to ambiguous nouns based on the formal criterion (Laleko, 2018).

Similarly, monolingual and bilingual children, who were tested by Norwegian linguists prefer formal gender assignment at least at the beginning of language acquisition. How quickly the category of gender is acquired depends on the opacity of this category in a particular language. For instance, gender acquisition in Norwegian is expected to take longer than that of Russian, because of the more opaque gender system in Norwegian. However, Russian gender system has many exceptional cases, which make its acquisition difficult. Rodina (2008) believes that children acquire formal gender rules at the very beginning of gender acquisition and supplement their gender system with semantic gender cues later on (cue-based approach). Frequency plays an important role in these processes. Considering heritage speakers, Norwegian linguists underline the overgeneralization of masculine gender for all three genders, including exceptional nouns, in heritage Russian in Norway.

So, it is clear that the findings of different scholars in relation to Russian grammatical gender do not contradict, but complement each other. In addition to that, they form the basis for future research work in this area.

Chapter 5. Empirical Study.

5.1. Introduction.

After having presented a detailed theoretical research on gender in heritage Russian in Germany, let me describe the empirical study, which I conducted with adult heritage Russian speakers in Germany in order to compare the language behaviour of my participants with the results of previous studies and in order to ascertain the main correlations in gender agreement by Russian-German bilinguals.

The category of heritage speakers is wide and diverse. It makes it especially difficult to investigate the main characteristics of heritage languages. First of all, different levels of language skills of the speakers should be considered. The subjects of my experiment are adult advanced heritage speakers of Russian, who had exposure not only to the spoken, but also to the written Russian language.

Next, the choice of the most appropriate methods of the investigation of use of particular phenomena by particular speakers is also a very responsible and difficult task. Indeed, the question as to what methods are the most effective for the investigation of heritage languages is a debatable one. For instance, Polinsky (2006) argues for spontaneous speech production as the most objective method, considering such methods as acceptability judgements useless, because of the inaccuracy and changeability of heritage speakers' choices and answers (p. 196). Similarly, translation tasks are of little help, because of the limited vocabulary of the speakers (Polinsky, 2006, p. 199). It is important to mention, however, that Polinsky worked with low-level heritage speakers, who had big gaps in the Russian language. By contrast, Laleko (2010c) worked with advanced heritage speakers. She chose controlled tasks for some of her experiments. The scholar argues that spontaneous speech tasks make it difficult to analyse particular grammatical phenomena, especially those, which do not presuppose the analysis of errors (Laleko, 2010c, pp. 138-143). As I also work with advanced heritage speakers, I have followed Laleko (2010c) and used controlled tasks for my major test.

In this chapter I will describe my participants and methods in detail. Moreover, I will present my predictions and research questions. Finally, I will illustrate the main results of the experiment without explaining them.

5.2. The Participants of the Study.

For the purposes of my study, I have tested three groups of participants. The first group was represented by adult Russian heritage speakers in Germany. The second group consisted of baseline speakers, that is Russian first generation immigrants in Germany. The third group of participants included monolingual Russian native speakers, who use Russian as the only language in their everyday life. In what follows, I will describe each of these groups in detail.

Heritage speakers represent a wide and diverse group of speakers. Their biographies, language input, motivation and language proficiency differ greatly. In order to collect the data for my study, I chose heritage speakers with a very similar background. I worked with 37 adult Russian second generation immigrants. The mean age of the participants is 20 in the range of 16 to 26. I chose the participants, whose language acquisition had already finished, on purpose. It is important for the goals of this thesis that the grammar of the subjects has been established, which is generally agreed to be the case in puberty or at about the age of 13 (cf. Savielle-Troiike, 2012, p. 13).

I conducted a qualitative, but not a quantitative, study. Having a detailed analysis of the results of my tests is more important for the goals of my investigation than a large number of participants.

I worked with simultaneous bilinguals. This means that the speakers started to acquire both Russian and German early in life. Most of the heritage speakers were born in Germany in the families of Russian immigrants, where at least one parent speaks Russian as his/her primary language. Some of them came to Germany early in life, that is to say before the age of three. All the subjects went to kindergarten at about the age of three or earlier.

The heritage speakers under consideration use Russian for communication within their family and immediate community. Only a few of the participants learned Russian as a foreign language at the academic high school. Others learned to read and write in Russian at home either with the help of their parents or through self-learning. Therefore, every subject had exposure not only to the spoken, but also to the written Russian language, although exposure to literacy was poorer. Regarding German, one can assert that the participants are fully proficient in the language. German can be considered to be their primary language. Importantly, all heritage speakers, who participated in the study, represent the group of undergraduates and senior pupils. They are students either of an academic high school or of a university in Germany.

My subjects are highly motivated to preserve their heritage language. They take part in different Russian social and educational projects and seminars and travel to the homeland of their parents (for instance, Russia, Ukraine, Kasachstan) regularly. Therefore, the level of their proficiency in heritage Russian is high. Most of my participants are the parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church in Stuttgart and the members of the Russian Orthodox Youth Organisation in Germany. Some of my subjects are family members of children who go to the bilingual Russian-German kindergarten “Märchenwelt” (“Fairy-tale world”) in Stuttgart. Others are members of the Russian theatre group “Brücke” (“Bridge”) in Stuttgart.

On the basis of the translation task, which I will describe below, I subdivided heritage speakers into two groups. The first group, advanced heritage speakers, showed better results in translation. In particular, they made less than 20 percent of errors. The second group, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers, made more than 20 percent of errors, but less than 40 percent. During the analysis of errors, I ignored the small errors in morphology and spelling, when they delivered the same message as in the German sentence. Similarly, I accepted variations in translation. As a result, I categorised 28 of the participants into a group of advanced heritage speakers and 9 of the participants into a group of intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers.

The second group of participants is represented by the Russian first generation immigrants in Germany (baseline speakers for my heritage speakers). As with the heritage speakers, my baseline speakers are highly motivated to preserve their native language and native culture. This group of participants consists of parents and of Russian teachers of the heritage speakers, who participated in the study. Needless to say that the first generation immigrants are also either parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church in Stuttgart or members (parents or pedagogues) of the theatre group “Bridge” or family members and pedagogues of the children of the “Fairy-tail world” kindergarten in Stuttgart. I tested 35 baseline speakers. The mean age of the group is 45 in the range of 33 to 49. All of them have finished a university in their native country. The participants are well integrated into life in Germany. All of them work full- or part-time and have good knowledge of German (B2 to C1 level).

The goal of my study is to find the deviations of heritage language compared to that of monolinguals. That is why a controlled group of monolinguals is important for the evaluation of the data. Monolingual speakers do not use Russian in accordance with its dictionary

norms and grammatical rules. Consequently, I prefer the language of monolingual Russians to contemporary standard Russian. The control group consists of the monolingual Russian native speakers, who were born and are living in a Russian-speaking environment. I worked with 27 monolingual native speakers. Their mean age is 25 in the range of 15 to 30. As with the heritage speakers, all of the monolingual native speakers are undergraduates or senior pupils. The big majority of them are the students of the Izmail State University of Humanities in the town Izmail, which is situated in the Odessa Region in the south of Ukraine. Due to the latest political changes in the Ukraine, it should be noted that I tested my monolingual participants in 2018, when education in the Russian language was acceptable. The south and the east of Ukraine are Russian-speaking parts of the country. The participants grew up in a purely Russian environment. All the subjects in this group reported using Russian in everyday communication in all spheres of life. So, my participants can be considered monolingual Russian native speakers.

5.3. Methods.

My main point in the choice of methods was to test what agreement patterns the above-described participants use with the four classes of the exceptional nouns. As previously mentioned, exceptional nouns include hybrids referring to females (for example, *vrač* “doctor”), common gender nouns referring to males (for example, *kollega* “colleague”), male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja* (for example, *papa* “dad”, *Vasja*) and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (for example, *Liz-ok*, *Ir-č-ik*). It is apparent that all these nouns represent a form-meaning conflict if gender is considered. Their morphological and lexical gender values are in conflict.

I checked their biographical data, before I let the participants do the test. First of all, I had a small talk with every participant. I could then estimate their communicative skills. Moreover, it helped me to gain a first impression of their language proficiency and of their motivation for my test.

After this brief conversation, every participant had to fill in the questionnaire, which consisted of some biographical questions and of questions about the participants' language experience in Russian and in German. As expected, the participants use Russian to some degree everyday. Besides, most of them are proud of their Russian background.

I conducted an experiment on gender agreement, which consists of two big tasks. The first task was important in order to check the proficiency level of my participants. Heritage speakers had to translate 30 sentences from German into Russian. All sentences included a word, which should have been translated as one of the four above-mentioned noun classes.

I did not include female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* in the translation task, because their translation, namely the one-to-one transfer from Russian, was obvious. The few of sentences, which include male names ending in *-a/ -ja* confirm this assumption.

If participants used a synonym word, which suited the given context and reflected the correct meaning of the sentence, it was accepted as correct. For example, *kollega* “a colleague” and *sotrudnik* “associate, colleague” are close synonyms in Russian. So, I accepted both variants of the translation. Yet still, the answers which did not entail one of the exceptional nouns, were not included in the study. There were not many such answers.

Moreover, I ignored small morphological and spelling errors, which did not hinder the understanding of the words’ meanings. As an example of such an error, the word *kollega* “a colleague” should be written with two “l”, but I had a case where it was written with only one “l”. I did not count this as an error.

There were no serious grammatical errors in the translation task. Probably, this is because of the simple grammatical structure of the given sentences. All the sentences consisted of an adjectival modifier, a subject and a verbal predicate. Some sentences entailed adverbial modifiers, but they were of no importance for the sentences.

In order to check the proficiency of the subjects, I concentrated on their lexical knowledge. Doing this, I followed the idea of the correlation of lexical and grammatical proficiency. According to this idea, the more errors the speakers make in their lexicon, the more grammatical errors they make (Polinsky, 1995b, p. 115; Polinsky, 2006, p. 252).

As mentioned above, most of my participants translated more than 80 percent of the items in the first task correctly. Therefore, I referred them to the group of advanced heritage speakers. Those participants, who made more errors, were put into the group of intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers. Interestingly, the results of the translation task coincide with my first impression of the participants after the small talk. The language of the advanced heritage speakers is more fluent and their vocabulary is richer than that of the lower proficiency speakers.

Interestingly enough, during the analysis of the results of the translation task, I noticed that hybrids appeared to have the most various agreement patterns. That is why I analysed these patterns in detail, although I did not plan to use the translation task in my main

discussion. The first task included 11 sentences with hybrids. 5 of the sentences included paired hybrids and 6 of them included unpaired hybrids. The interesting observation concerning hybrids, which is described in detail in chapter 7, is that heritage speakers showed the tendency to use derived feminine forms of hybrid nouns referring to females. This language behaviour was observed even in the situations, where it is grammatically impossible.

The first generation immigrants as well as the monolingual native speakers were not given the translation task. The main reason for this is the insufficient foreign language knowledge. Although the first generation speakers are proficient in German, it is possible that they could misunderstand German sentences or not understand some of the words in the test. These two groups received 30 clusters of words, which they had to combine in 30 sentences. They had to write down the new sentences. In order to preserve the form-meaning mismatch, the sex of the nouns used in the clusters was predefined. They were allowed to change the form of all words in the sentence, including hybrid nouns. For example:

(1) opytn (-yj/ -aja) + vrač + prooperiroval (-/ -a) + menja (vrač → ženščina)

“An experienced doctor has operated me (doctor is female)”

Answer: Opytn-yj vrač prooperiroval-a menja.

As I did not need to check the proficiency of the two groups of participants, I mostly concentrated on the agreement patterns, which the participants chose in these sentences. Later on, I used the results of this task to confirm the results of the second task, but I did not include these results in the main analysis of nouns in obligatory contexts and nouns in variable contexts, described in chapters 6 and 7.

It is important to note that in all the tasks, presented in the test, the gender of the referent was predetermined. The gender was chosen in order to cause a form-meaning conflict, which the participants had to solve. All verbs were used in the past indefinite form, because only this verb form can undoubtedly reflect the gender of the referent. Moreover, all nouns were used in the nominative case, because it is the only case, where all three agreement patterns are possible with all four exceptional noun classes. Both adjectival and verbal agreements had to be chosen for every sentence. Only in this way could I evaluate the most often used agreement patterns with these nouns and the status of mixed agreement

patterns in the different types of the Russian language. So, the participants had a choice between formal agreement, semantic agreement and mixed agreement.

The second task of the test was the same for all three participant groups. It was the multiple-choice task and it consisted of 70 sentences. The main job of the participants was to choose the correct agreement patterns in the situation of a form-meaning conflict. The participants were given sentences with the four exceptional noun classes, used equally often. They had a choice between masculine and feminine endings with adjectives and verbs. Similar to the first task, I used both verbal predicates and adjectival modifiers in every sentence. Verbs were used in the past indefinite form. As is known, adjectives and verbs in past indefinite are always marked for gender.

The multiple choice task consisted of 70 sentences. For example:

(2) Eht_ (-ot/ -a) malen'k_ (-ij/ -aja) sirota byl_ (-/ -a) očen' čuvstvitel'n_ (-oj/ -ym)
"This little orphan was very sensitive"

(3) Mo_ (-j/ -ja) ljubim_ (-yj/ -aja) Dašunčik opjat' opozdal_ (-/ -a)
"My dear Dašunčik is late again"

Although several correct answers were possible, the participants were allowed to choose only one answer. As I found out later, most of participants were sure that there is only one grammatically correct answer in the given sentences. This shows that the choice of participants was not accidental. They really believed that the answer given is the only correct way of formulating the sentence.

The test was unlimited in time. The most participants did the tests online, filling in the Google-Forms. The few subjects, who had problems with online tests, received printed variants of the test, which they submitted later.

Thus, in order to obtain the most objective results for my study and to examine both competence and performance of the participants, I combined the spontaneous language production, namely the conversation I had with every participant, with a controlled test, namely the translation task, when I checked the proficiency of my heritage speakers. As these tests confirmed the high proficiency level of the participants, I chose the multiple choice task as the most appropriate for the main test of my study. High proficiency heritage

speakers have less problems with their first language and therefore do not choose answers blindly.

Following Laleko (2010c), I did not only concentrate on the errors of my participants, but also searched for divergence in heritage Russian, manifested in covert restructuring.

After collecting the data, I counted the percentage of the use of the three types of agreement patterns for every class of exceptional nouns. After all the calculations, I classified the results, analysed them and formulated the main correlations.

Last but not least, I compared my data with that of previous studies. In this way, I was able to present the problem under discussion more objectively. I pointed out the main differences in my study as compared to previous studies, formulated my observations and made conclusions.

In order to be able to present my thesis at the international level standard and for a more convenient comparison of the study with American researches, I wrote my paper in (British) English.

5.4. Research Questions.

The main goal of my research is to give answers to the following questions.

First of all, what are the main principles of the use of gender agreement patterns with the four exceptional noun classes (hybrids referring to females, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, common gender nouns, male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*)? I am interested in both the Russian language of monolingual speakers and heritage Russian.

Secondly, are there any differences between gender agreement patterns used with different noun classes by different speakers? I want to know what effect the agreement variability has on the speaker's language behaviour, that is to say if there is a difference in the use of gender agreement patterns between nouns in obligatory contexts and nouns in variable contexts.

Thirdly, are there any mixed agreement patterns in the results of the participants and if so, what kind of patterns are these? Are they unique and rather complex? I would like to know if heritage speakers use them. If they do, I would like to know if there is any difference between the use of mixed agreement by heritage speakers and monolinguals.

Next, I would like to consider the question as to what factors play a role in the acquisition of gender agreement patterns. Thanks to the fact that not only heritage Russian speakers, but also baseline speakers (pedagogues and parents of heritage speakers) took part in my study, I am able to check the role of input in gender acquisition. Moreover, I will

consider input in combination with other factors, which are important for the acquisition of a language (for example, age constraints, social environment).

Moreover, I have tested heritage speakers, who are not equally proficient in their heritage language, although all of them have mastered the language very well. As a result of this, I am able to establish dependencies between the participants' use of gender agreement patterns and their proficiency level.

In addition, it would be interesting to check if bilinguals in Germany have less problems with the category of gender than bilinguals in the USA. Most research on gender in heritage Russian has been done in the USA, where heritage speakers master English as their majority language. As is known, grammatical gender is not well expressed in English. By contrast, German has a well-defined three-gender-system, similar to that of Russian. Therefore, where possible, I will pay attention to the question as to the role of language transfer.

Lastly, I am eager to ask what determines the differences and similarities between standard Russian, baseline Russian and heritage Russian. I have worked with very proficient heritage speakers and so I am curious to know the extent of how their language behaviour differs from that of monolingual native speakers. I would like to find out if advanced heritage speakers can use gender agreement patterns target-like.

5.5. Predictions.

Based on the previous studies, discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, and on my own research, which I did for the purposes of my master thesis, I have formulated the following predictions.

To begin with, I consider that all my participants will have preserved the three-gender-system of Russian, because they are highly proficient in this language. Therefore, they should have no problems with the appropriate gender agreement patterns. However, some exceptional nouns exist, which do not obey standard rules of gender agreement. For example, the noun *sirota* "an orphan" can denote both males and females, although it has a feminine form. Also, the noun *diplomat* "a diplomatist" can refer to both females and males, although it has a masculine form. More than that, the latter noun referring to female can be used with feminine, masculine and mixed agreement patterns. In my opinion, this variability should lead to more problems with the exceptional nouns presented in this study. I agree with Laleko (2018), who shows in her study that the increased flexibility in both interpretation and agreement of nouns adds complications for heritage speakers (p. 261). That is why I predict

that my subjects will have difficulties with gender agreement of exceptional nouns. However, due to the proficiency level of the speakers, I do not believe that these difficulties will be serious.

Next, based on the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Sorace, 2011) and the considerations of Rodina (2008) as to the status of proper names, one may expect male names ending in a vowel as well as female names ending in a consonant would present less difficulties to heritage speakers than other exceptional noun classes.

As a reminder, according to the Interface Hypothesis, “the end-state grammar of very advanced and near-native speakers is that grammatical aspects that involve an interface between syntax and other cognitive systems often present residual first language (L1) effects, indeterminacy or optionality” (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006, p. 340). This position has been proven by Laleko (2010c), when she considered the use of Russian imperfective verb forms and found out that advanced heritage speakers diverge from monolinguals in the use of perfective and imperfective verb forms if pragmatic factors are involved, that is to say if the syntax-pragmatics interface is involved.

As previously mentioned, hybrids and common gender nouns are referential nouns, which means that they can refer to both females and males, depending on the context. According to the above-mentioned hypothesis, the dependency on the pragmatic information should make these nouns more difficult for heritage speakers. Conversely, proper names denote only one particular referent. They should be easier to acquire by heritage speakers.

Likewise, Rodina (2008) pays attention to the simplicity of proper names. Rodina (2008) observes that male names ending in a vowel can be unproblematically acquired by children. The linguist explains this fact by means of the simplicity of their semantic structure (pp. 106-109).

Yet still, I want to underscore the point that male names ending in *-a/ -ja* and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* are different. Along with hybrids, female names ending in a consonant can take various agreement patterns (feminine, masculine, mixed). By contrast, male terms and male names ending in a vowel only take semantic agreement patterns, which make the use of these nouns easier.

On the basis of these considerations, I predict that male names ending in a vowel will be used target-like by my participants. I consider this noun class to be the easiest one among the exceptional nouns in question. Similarly, male terms ending in a consonant will not be difficult for heritage speakers, because they allow no variability in agreement and

have lexical (not referential) meaning, which is just a bit more complicated than that of proper names.

Although common gender nouns are referential nouns, I still predict that heritage speakers will have less problems with this class of nouns than with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. The reason for this assumption is that the female names in question can be used with different agreement patterns, which can confuse heritage speakers more than the ability of common gender nouns to refer to both males and females.

As a result of the above-given considerations, I predict that hybrids will be the most difficult class of the exceptional nouns in question. Indeed, hybrids can refer to both males and females and allow three agreement patterns.

Further, as already stated, due to the high proficiency level of my participants, I do not consider that they will make many errors in the test. However, they could be confused by the form-meaning mismatch typical for the exceptional nouns. Because of the variability in the use of gender agreement patterns with nouns in variable contexts, I predict that the results of my participants will diverge from the results of monolingual native speakers, even if these results are grammatically correct.

A similar phenomenon has already been determined by Laleko (2010c). She considered the use of perfective and imperfective verb forms and paid attention to the fact that heritage speakers sometimes use the given verbs differently from the monolingual Russian native speakers, although grammatically correctly. Laleko (2010c) calls this phenomenon *covert restructuring* of aspect, that is “a grammatical reorganization of the perfective-imperfective opposition not manifested in overt errors” (p. 39). In her study, Laleko (2010c) clearly demonstrates that “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” and that “lack of errors in production may not be a guarantee of full convergence with the baseline” (p. 39). I claim that covert restructuring also takes place in my study. I predict that in the situation of limited input, heritage speakers will diverge more in their use of gender agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns as compared to monolingual native speakers.

My next point refers to the proficiency level of the participants. In one of their studies, Benmamoun et al. (2010, 2013b) declare the so-called lexico-grammatical correlation in heritage languages. In particular, they claim that “lower-proficiency speakers have more difficulty in accessing lexical items” and have difficulties with utterance planning (Benmamoun et al., 2013b, p. 12). All in all, according to Benmamoun et al., “knowledge of lexical items and grammatical knowledge are correlated” (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 22;

Benmamoun et al., 2013b, p. 135). For example, Polinsky (2008) has shown that heritage speakers with lower speech rate have restructured the Russian gender system from three-gender (feminine, masculine, neuter) to two-gender (feminine, masculine) system. At the same time, her subjects, who showed higher speech rate results, preserved the three-gender system. I used criteria, which are similar to those of Benmamoun et al. (2010, 2013b), for the translation task of my study. Similar to a speech rate task, a translation task also requires access to lexical vocabulary and utterance planning. On the basis of the results of this task, I have subdivided all participants into two groups according to their proficiency level. One of these groups consists of advanced heritage speakers. They showed very good results in the translation task. I consider that these participants will be able to use gender agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns target-like.

As heritage speakers have limited input in Russian, I believe that heritage speakers, who showed worse results in the translation task, will use more morphological agreement patterns in the situations of form-meaning conflict, which the exceptional nouns in question represent. Indeed, both Laleko (2018, 2019) and Rodina (2008), who investigated the exceptional nouns, assume that morphological agreement patterns represent the simplest way of gender agreement for less experienced speakers. Rodina (2008) tested the acquisition of morphological and semantic gender agreement criteria in the monolingual child language acquisition and concluded that morphological gender criterion is acquired much earlier than the semantic one, which requires frequency of use and language experience. Laleko (2019), in turn, tested heritage speakers and second language learners and observed that “in resolving a conflict between meaning and form, the bilinguals appear to be more likely than the monolinguals to rely on form” (p. 170). On this ground, I conclude that Russian native speakers, who have not got enough language experience, such as children and heritage speakers, tend to use formal (morphological) agreement patterns with nouns, which represent a form-meaning conflict. Therefore, I expect that the participants, whose language proficiency is lower, will use more feminine agreement patterns with common gender nouns and male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja* and more masculine agreement patterns with hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

Furthermore, I predict that the less proficient participants will avoid mixed agreement patterns. Indeed, mixed agreement requires not only the knowledge of both semantic and formal agreement criteria, but also the ability to combine these criteria. It is a unique and complex syntactic structure, which requires sufficient input. Yet still, I expect to find the

examples of mixed agreement in the data of advanced heritage speakers, because this pattern is regularly used in the Russian language.

Regarding the control and baseline groups of subjects, that is the monolingual native speakers and the first generation immigrants, respectively, I believe in the native-speaker intuition of these participants. I predict that they will not have any problems with the given tasks. In particular, they will use gender agreement patterns according to the rules of standard Russian. Although all three agreement patterns are possible with some of the nouns under consideration, semantic agreement is the most common. Consequently, I predict that the speakers in question will prefer semantic agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns. However, I also predict a relatively high percentage of cases of mixed agreement patterns with hybrids referring to females.

I would like to pay attention not only to the use of gender agreement in Russian by different types of participants, but also to the reasons for this use. As previously mentioned, most studies on heritage languages have been done in the USA. Heritage speakers in the USA speak English as their majority language. In contrast to Russian, English does not have a well-expressed gender category. German, by contrast, has a well-defined three-gender-system, similar to that of Russian.

There are many discussions as to the role of language transfer, or in other words of “the interplay between the learner’s first (heritage) language and the second (dominant) language” (Benmamoun et al., 2013b, p. 169), in the acquisition of heritage languages. Numerous studies on this question have been conducted. For example, Schwartz et al. (2014) and Dieser (2009) proved the positive effect of the presence of gender category in German on the gender acquisition in Russian for Russian-German bilinguals. Montrul investigated transfer effects in heritage Spanish in the USA (for example, Montrul & Ionin, 2010; Montrul & Ionin, 2012). Polinsky (1995a, 1995b, 2006, 2007 and others) paid attention to the influence of English on heritage Russian. Certainly, this list of studies can be extended. According to all of these studies, the majority language influences the development of heritage language much. I also consider that German has an influence on heritage Russian. I believe that my participants will not have many problems with the use of gender agreement patterns, because of the presence of the gender category in their majority language to some extent. However, it should be noted that my subjects are high proficiency speakers of Russian. This shows that they have got enough language input in the acquisition of heritage

Russian. That is why, I predict that language transfer will not play a dominant role in their use of gender agreement.

Apart from the language transfer and proficiency level of the speakers, I would like to discuss input as one of the most important factors in heritage language acquisition. From the earlier studies, it is known that heritage language sooner or later becomes “structurally and functionally, the weaker language” (Benmamoun et al., 2010, pp. 9-10) and that a sufficient input from childhood till adulthood plays an extremely important role in heritage language acquisition. Benmamoun et al. (2010) ascertain that „[a] common pattern in simultaneous bilinguals is that as the child begins socialization in the majority language, the amount of input and use in the minority language is reduced” (p. 44). As a consequence, reduced input leads to reduced language proficiency.

The importance of input has also been investigated with regard to monolingual language acquisition. After the detailed consideration of gender acquisition by children, Rodina (2008) concludes that semantic and morphological gender agreement patterns are acquired differently. The acquisition of morphological agreement is innate (“grammatical competence”), whereas the acquisition of semantic agreement requires frequency of input (“sociolinguistic competence”) (Rodina, 2008, p. 55). However, Rodina (2008) worked with monolingual speakers. For bilinguals, frequency of input plays all the more important role. I agree with the recognised opinion that input is important in multilingual language acquisition. With regard to the fact that my baseline group of participants consists of well-educated people, who want to preserve their Russian identity, I believe that my heritage speakers have got a sufficient language input. As a result, I predict that they will use agreement patterns nearly target-like in my test. Some of them will show target-like results.

I agree with the linguists, who consider input in combination with other factors, which are important in language acquisition (Rodina, 2008; Benmamoun et al., 2010). It goes without saying that age, time epoch and socio-cultural experience of speakers plays a role in their use of language vocabulary and language structures.

Let me now summarise my predictions. I expect the following language behaviour of my participants. Firstly, I predict that my participants will have some difficulties in the use of gender agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns, investigated in this thesis. However, I do not believe that these difficulties will be serious. The reason for this is the high proficiency level of my participants. My heritage speakers have had a sufficient input from their parents and pedagogues and are very motivated to preserve their language and culture.

As for input, I believe that it plays an important role in bilingual language acquisition. However, this role should be considered only in combination with other factors (such as age, education and so on).

Besides, due to the lexico-grammatical correlation, determined by Benmamoun et al. (2013b), I predict that the more proficient heritage speakers will use gender agreement patterns without great divergences from the monolinguals. Moreover, I predict that advanced heritage speakers will not make overt errors in the test. Less proficient heritage speakers will prefer morphological agreement patterns in the situations of form-meaning conflict. Also, they will not use mixed agreement patterns to the extent of advanced speakers.

Due to the importance of variability and the role of pragmatic factors, I predict that hybrids will represent the biggest difficulties for my participants. Conversely, nouns in obligatory context will not represent a big challenge for heritage speakers.

I am eager to find out the answers to my research questions and to see in my results if my predictions are true.

5.6. Results.

The results of my study seem to be confusing at first sight. In this chapter, I will present them in the most transparent and understandable way. That is why I will not only present the data textually, but also visually with the help of tables and diagrams.

In subchapter 5.3, I showed how I had determined the proficiency level and the motivation degree of my participants, using such methods as spontaneous speech and a biographical questionnaire. Since these tasks served only as a preparation for the test and did not deal with the main discussion of this thesis, I will not present their results in this chapter. Yet still, it would be helpful to remind the reader that my participants showed a strong tendency to preserve the Russian language and culture in these tasks. The participants' answers underscored their pride in their Russian background. At the same time, the subjects expressed the need for a further development of their Russian knowledge and for an extension of their connections within the Russian-speaking community.

As with the questionnaire and the small talk mentioned above, the results of the translation task were used in order to establish the proficiency of the speakers. As a result, heritage speakers were subdivided into two groups, advanced heritage speakers and

intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers. I described these two groups in detail in subchapter 5.2.

In contrast to the two first tasks, the translation task appeared to be significant for the main discussion of the thesis. In particular, it is of interest if gender agreement with hybrids is concerned. In the translation task, the participants were allowed to choose their own appropriate translations for the given sentences, although the meaning of the words, their function in the sentence and their gender value were predetermined. As a reminder, I did not include female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* in the translation task, because I did not intend to check the peculiarities of the use of agreement patterns in this task. I wanted to check the lexical translation of words and sentences. The translation of proper names, namely the one-to-one transfer from Russian, was evident to me. A few sentences, which were used for this task and included male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, confirmed my assumption.

During the analysis of the results, I noticed that heritage speakers had had no problems in using the correct translations of common gender nouns and of male names and male terms ending in a vowel. However, hybrids referring to females represented a bigger challenge for the subjects. Firstly, I noticed that the translations of hybrids varied much as compared to the translations of other noun classes. Moreover, I observed the tendency to avoid the masculine form of hybrids referring to females, if it were at all possible. This tendency is very pronounced. The advanced heritage speakers used all paired hybrids referring to females in the derived feminine form. As a reminder, paired hybrids are nouns, which are usually used in the masculine form. However, the feminine form can be derived out of them. For example, heritage speakers translated a German word *die Lehrerin* “a female teacher” as *učitel’-n-ic-a* “a female teacher”, but not as *učitel’* “a (male/female) teacher”. However, both word forms are possible in Russian:

(1) *Učitel’/ učtel’-n-ic-a* daět domašnee zadanie každuju pjatnicu.

“A teacher.M/F gives homework every Friday”

Curiously, the advanced heritage speakers translated one quarter of the given unpaired hybrids using the derived feminine form. This use of unpaired hybrids is ungrammatical. For example, such an unpaired hybrid as *vrač* “a (male/female) doctor” was sometimes translated as **vrač-ich-a* “a female doctor”. The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers showed an even stronger tendency to avoid hybrids. As with the advanced heritage speakers, these participants used all paired hybrid nouns referring to females in the derived feminine form. As for unpaired hybrids, the subjects in question translated half of

them using the derived feminine form. So, the tendency to avoid hybrids in heritage Russian is very strong.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to compare these results of heritage speakers with the results of the two other groups of subjects. As is known, the control and the baseline groups of speakers had no translation task in their test. However, the nouns used in the translation task were also used in the first task given to these participants. To be precise, this first task was the combination of words into sentences. As a result, the monolingual Russian native speakers did not show any tendency to avoid hybrids. Moreover, they demonstrated the same results with both paired and unpaired hybrids. Only 6-7 percent of both paired and unpaired hybrids were used in the derived feminine form. The results of the first generation immigrants are similar to those of the monolingual speakers. They used about 12 percent of derived feminine nouns with both paired and unpaired hybrids. Summarizing, I do not observe the tendency of the avoidance of hybrids in the language of the monolingual Russian native speakers.

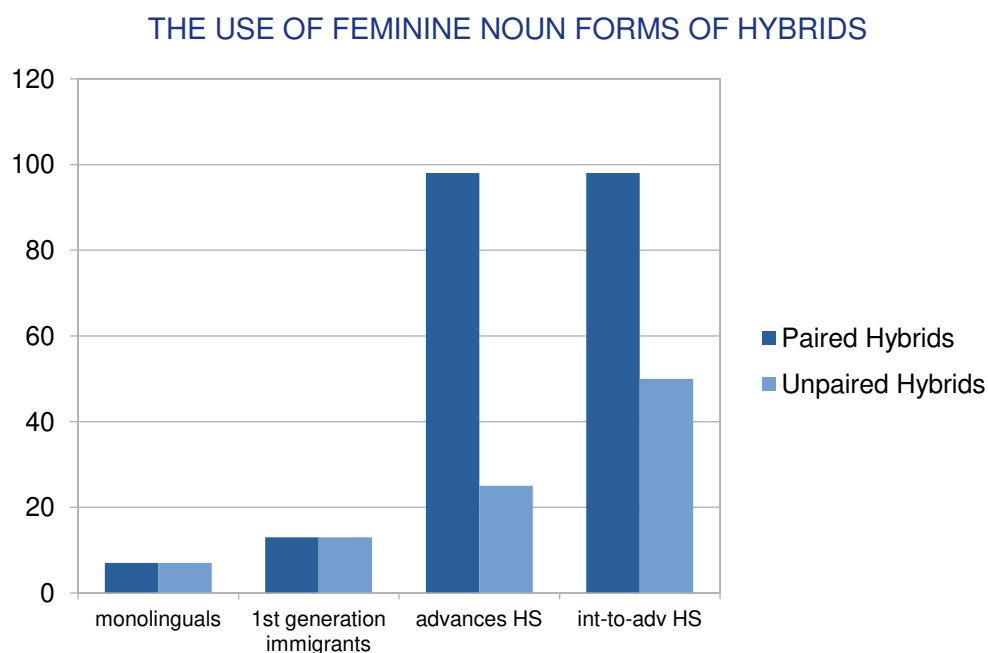
Table 5 comprises a summary of the results with regard to the avoidance of hybrids.

Table 5. The Use of Derived Feminine Noun Forms with Hybrids.

Control Speakers (Monolingual Russian Native Speakers):	Baseline Speakers (First Generation Immigrants):	Advanced Heritage Speakers:	Intermediate-to- Advanced Heritage Speakers:
paired hybrids in feminine form: 7%	paired hybrids in feminine form: 12%	paired hybrids in feminine form: 100%	paired hybrids in feminine form: 100%
unpaired hybrids in feminine form: 7%	unpaired hybrids in feminine form: 12%	unpaired hybrids in feminine form: 25%	unpaired hybrids in feminine form: 50%

Diagram 1 below reflects the contrast in the language behaviour of the three groups of speakers. In order to save space, I have used some abbreviations in the diagram. I referred to the monolingual Russian native speakers as *monolinguals*. More than that, I have abbreviated the notion of heritage speakers as *HS*.

Diagram 1. The Use of Derived Feminine Noun Forms with Hybrids.



The second task of my test was the multiple choice task, which included 70 sentences. In these sentences, I used every class of the exceptional nouns under consideration in equal measure. The nouns were used in various contexts with a large number of sentences and the variability of contexts serving my main purpose. This was namely to get the most objective data on gender agreement with the exceptional nouns.

I will start with the data on mixed agreement patterns. Although all three agreement patterns (masculine, feminine, mixed) were used by my participants, their use of mixed agreement is of a special interest. Indeed, mixed agreement has a unique structure, which is not typical for most languages. As a reminder, mixed agreement structure includes an adjectival modifier in the masculine form and a verbal predicate in the feminine form.

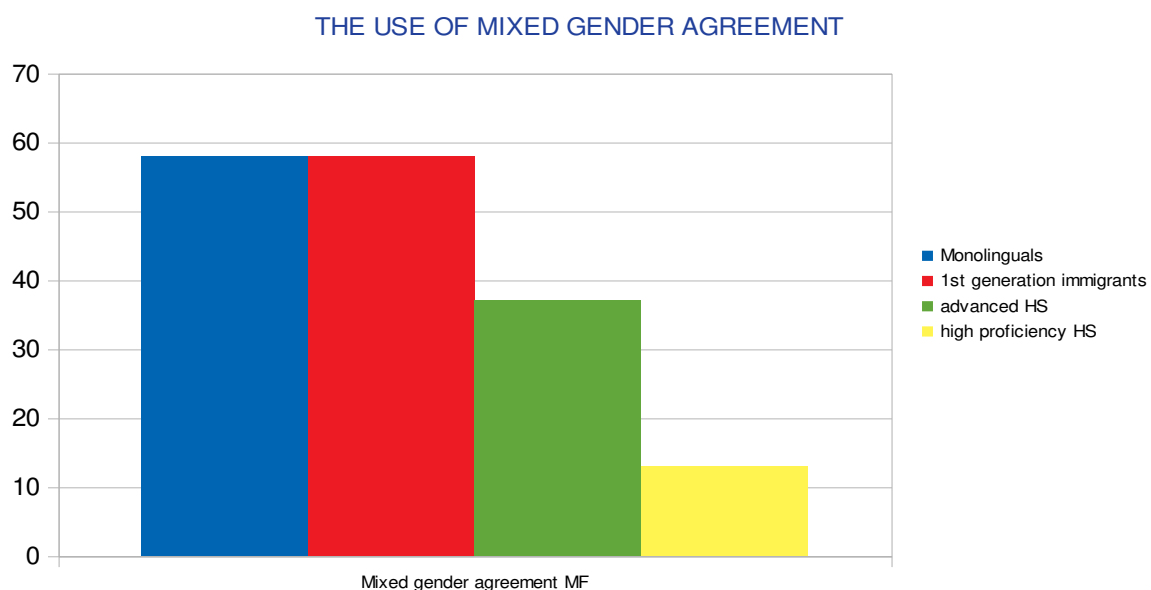
Importantly, the reversed structure of mixed agreement (feminine adjectival modifier and masculine verbal predicate) is ungrammatical and contradicts the Agreement Hierarchy of Corbett (1979). It was mainly ignored by my participants. There were a few exceptions, which did not play any role for the results of the study. That is why I concentrated on the three grammatically correct agreement patterns, that is to say feminine, masculine and mixed (masculine adjectival modifier and feminine verbal predicate).

As is already known, mixed agreement is not typical of nouns in obligatory contexts. For that reason, I have not done any research on mixed agreement when analysing these nouns.

On the whole, the results of the study demonstrate that the use of mixed agreement depends on the proficiency of a speaker. With regard to hybrids, it is obvious. The two most proficient groups of participants, namely the monolingual native speakers and the first generation immigrants, used most of hybrids (about 58%) with mixed agreement patterns. The advanced heritage speakers used a significantly smaller number of mixed agreement patterns (about 37%). The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used even fewer mixed agreement patterns (about 12%).

Diagram 2 below presents these results. It should be noticed that I again have used abbreviations in the diagram. In particular, I have abbreviated the notion of heritage speakers as HS and the structure of mixed agreement as MF, where M stands for the masculine form of an adjective and F stands for the feminine verb form.

Diagram 2. The Use of Mixed Agreement with Hybrid Nouns.



Interestingly, the results of the use of mixed agreement with female names ending in a consonant differ from the results with hybrids. The control group and the baseline group of participants preferred semantic agreement with these nouns. They used 80 percent and 82 percent of semantic agreement patterns with these nouns, respectively. This can be

explained by means of the status of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* as proper nouns. They refer to a particular individual, whose gender is predetermined. As is already understood, this is the main reason, why proper names are the easiest nouns to acquire (Laleko, 2018, p. 145, p. 182).

In contrast to the monolingual native speakers, heritage speakers did not use one particular agreement pattern with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. The advanced heritage speakers used about 30 percent of mixed agreement patterns with these nouns. The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used about 15 percent of mixed agreement patterns. The rest of agreement patterns were almost equally distributed between the morphological and the semantic agreement principles. The reasons for this difference in the results should be considered in detail. I will do this in chapters 6 and 7. In my opinion, the results of the study obviously demonstrate that heritage speakers and baseline speakers use agreement patterns, and in particular mixed agreement, basing on different principles.

Before I start the consideration of these principles, I will briefly present all the results of the second task, which are relevant for my thesis. I will show the differences in the choice of agreement patterns between different participant groups.

Let me start with hybrids. The monolingual native speakers and the first generation speakers preferred mixed agreement patterns with these nouns. Semantic agreement was also frequently used, but lagged behind the mixed agreement. Likewise, the advanced heritage speakers used mixed agreement patterns frequently. However, they preferred semantic agreement more frequently. Conversely, the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers predominantly used morphological agreement with hybrids. This shows that the use of mixed agreement patterns depends on the proficiency of speakers. The lower the proficiency of a speaker, the less mixed agreement patterns he or she uses. Moreover, the results present the tendency of the participants, whose proficiency level is lower, to prefer formal agreement, which is considered to be easier to acquire (Laleko, 2019, p. 159).

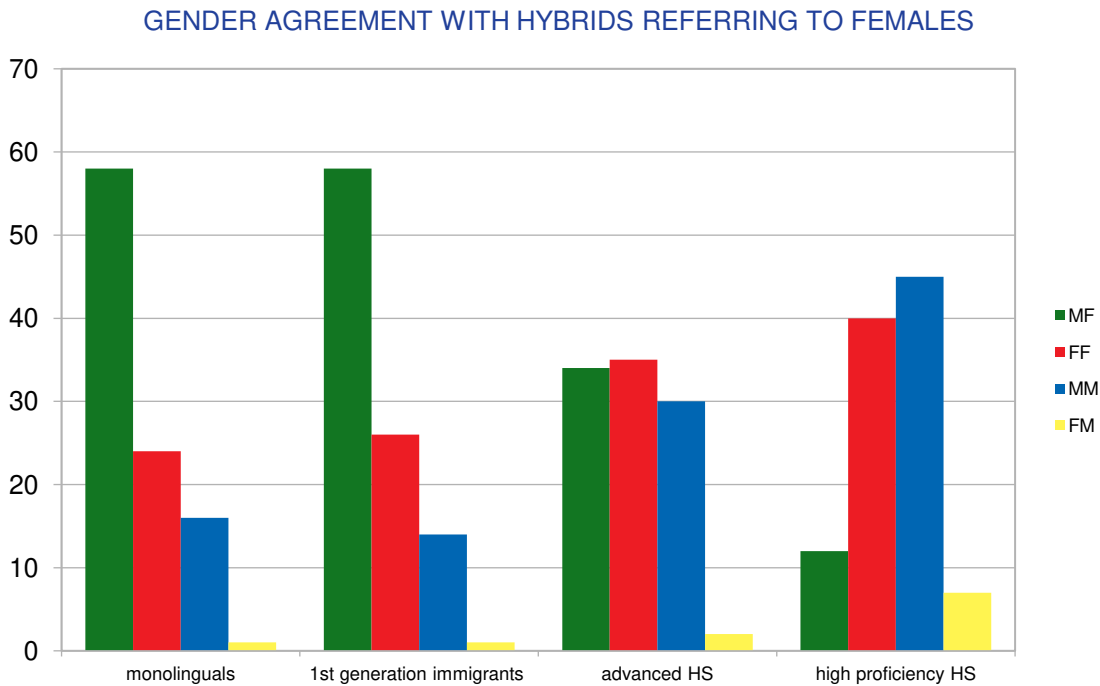
By and large, the results of the study demonstrate that heritage speakers have acquired all the three types of agreement patterns and can use them in a similar way as monolingual native speakers. As previously mentioned, both the similarities and the differences in the use of gender agreement by different groups of participants will be discussed later (see chapters 6 and 7). Table 6 summarizes the above presented results.

Table 6. Agreement Patterns with Hybrids Referring to Females.

	Monolingual native speakers	First generation immigrants	Advanced heritage speakers	Intermediate-to- Advanced heritage speakers
Feminine (semantic) agreement	24%	26%	35%	40%
Mixed agreement	58%	58%	34%	12%
Masculine (Formal) agreement	16%	14%	30%	45%

To visualise these results best, I will also present them in a diagram. Similar to diagram 1 and diagram 2, for reasons of space, I will use abbreviations in the diagrams 3, 4 and 5 presented below. I have abbreviated the four agreement patterns (3 grammatically correct patterns and 1 grammatically incorrect pattern) in the following way. MF stands for masculine adjective and feminine verb, FF stands for feminine adjective and feminine verb, MM stands for masculine adjective and masculine verb, FM stands for feminine adjective and masculine verb (grammatically incorrect). The monolingual Russian native speakers are shortened to monolinguals. Heritage speakers are abbreviated as HS. The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers are shortened to int-to-adv HS.

Diagram 3. Agreement Patterns with Hybrids Referring to Females.



Similar to hybrids, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* also belong to nouns in variable contexts. Curiously, heritage speakers used more mixed agreement patterns with these nouns than the control and baseline groups of participants. The monolingual native speakers used mixed agreement patterns only in 11 percent of cases. Similarly, the first generation immigrants edited only 17 percent of the given sentences using mixed agreement. By contrast, the advanced heritage speakers used 30 percent of female names ending in a consonant with mixed agreement, which is twice as much as in the case of the above-mentioned participants. The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used less mixed agreement patterns than the more proficient heritage speakers (14 percent).

In general, semantic agreement dominated with the female names ending in a consonant. The monolingual native speakers used semantic agreement patterns in 83 percent of cases. The first generation immigrants used them in 81 percent of cases. The two groups of heritage speakers used feminine (semantic) agreement patterns with female names in question in about 45% of cases.

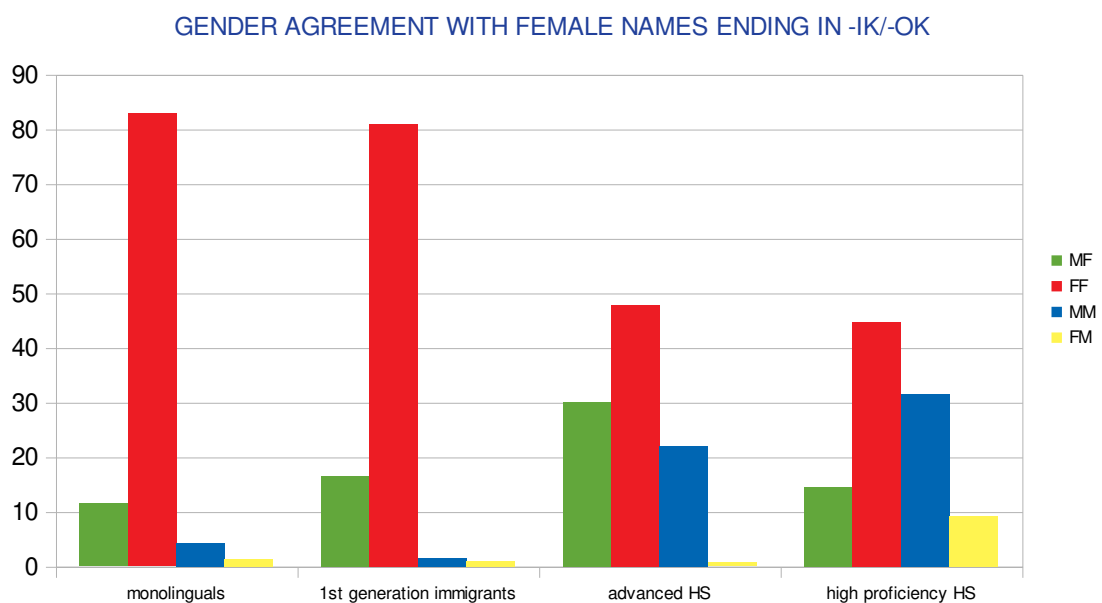
The reasons for the use of mixed agreement with female names ending in a consonant and the dominance of the semantic agreement patterns in the non-heritage speakers should be discussed in detail. Chapter 7 provides this discussion.

Table 7. Agreement patterns with female names ending in a consonant.

	Monolingual native speakers	First generation immigrants	Advanced heritage speakers	Intermediate-to-Advanced heritage speakers
Feminine (semantic) agreement	83%	81%	48%	45%
Mixed agreement	11%	16%	30%	15%
Masculine (Formal) agreement	4%	4%	22%	32%

Diagram 4 visualises these results and shows the contrasts in the results of the different groups of speakers. I have used the same abbreviations as in diagram 3.

Diagram 4. Agreement patterns with female names ending in a consonant.



So, it has been shown that the results with nouns in variable contexts are complex. By contrast, I will show that the results with nouns in obligatory contexts, namely with common gender nouns and male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja* are simpler. These nouns were predominantly used with semantic agreement patterns by all the participant groups. Yet still, the results point out some correlations. Most importantly, they confirm the assumption that the participants, whose proficiency level is lower, use more morphological or formal agreement patterns.

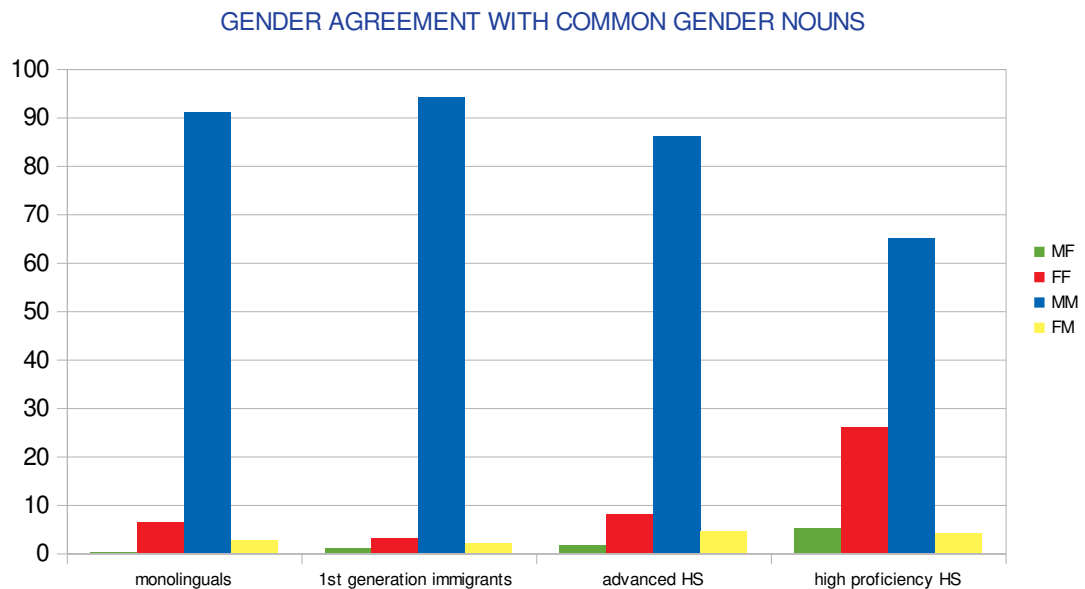
Tables 8 and 9 below demonstrate the exact results of the study. Table 8 deals with common gender nouns. In more than 90% of their answers, the control and the baseline groups of participants used the semantic agreement patterns. The advanced heritage speakers used these patterns in more than 80% of their responses. The intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used these semantic agreement patterns in only 65% of times. The results show clearly that the frequency of use of semantic agreement with common gender nouns depends on the proficiency of a speaker. The reason for this interdependence could lie in the opportunity to use common gender nouns referring both to females and to males. This inconsistency can confuse less proficient speakers. The more detailed analysis of these results is presented in chapter 6.

Table 8. Agreement patterns with Common Gender Nouns.

	Monolingual native speakers	First generation immigrants	Advanced heritage speakers	Intermediate-to-Advanced heritage speakers
Masculine (semantic) agreement	91%	95%	86%	65%
Mixed agreement	1%	1%	5%	5%
Feminine (Formal) agreement	6%	3%	7%	25%

Diagram 5 below reflects the dominance of semantic agreement and the difference in the use of gender agreement by different participant groups best.

Diagram 5. Agreement Patterns with Common Gender Nouns.



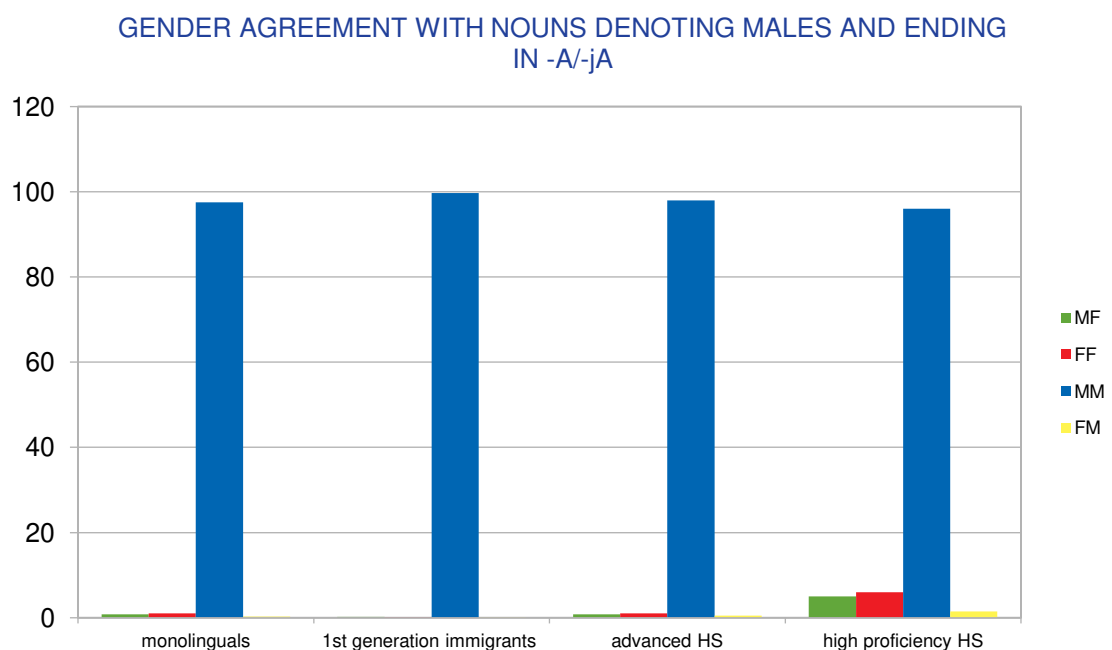
The situation with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja* is straightforward. Heritage speakers use gender agreement patterns with these nouns target-like. All four groups of participants used the semantic agreement patterns with these nouns for over 90% of the situations.

Table 9. Agreement Patterns with Male Names Ending in *-a/ -ja*.

	Monolingual native speakers	First generation immigrants	Advanced heritage speakers	Intermediate-to- Advanced heritage speakers
Masculine (semantic) agreement	99%	100%	99%	91%
Mixed agreement	0,5%	0%	1%	5%
Feminine (Formal) agreement	0%	0%	0%	1%

A diagram for the representation of these straightforward results seems to be superfluous. However, I think that it visualises the dominance of semantic agreement with male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja* very well.

Diagram 6. Agreement Patterns with Male Terms and Male Names Ending in *-a/ -ja*.



5.7. Conclusion.

As a summary, this chapter describes my empirical study. I have put the research questions, which I am going to discuss in the next chapter and I have predicted the answers to these questions, which depend on the results of the experiment. First of all, I have predicted that the participants of the study would have difficulties with the exceptional nouns under investigation and especially with hybrids referring to females and female names ending in a consonant. Moreover the degree of these difficulties would depend on the speakers' proficiency level.

I believe that advanced heritage speakers will not make many overt errors in the test. However, they will to some degree diverge from the monolingual participants. I expect that variability of agreement patterns, which can be used with some of the exceptional nouns, will be the main reason for difficulties had by heritage speakers in the test.

All in all, the study shows that heritage speakers meet different challenges with nouns in variable contexts and nouns in obligatory contexts. Variability confuses heritage speakers. Their results with nouns in obligatory contexts are almost target-like. However, in the case of nouns in variable contexts, divergence from the monolingual gender agreement use can be observed. This divergence is of interest and will be discussed in detail later in this work.

Chapter 6. Discussion of the Results with Regard to Nouns in Obligatory Contexts.

6.1. Introduction.

As it follows from previous chapters, the topic of gender in heritage languages provokes a great amount of linguistic discussion and motivates numerous scholars to carry out new investigations. Unsurprisingly, the combination of the two intriguing questions – heritage languages on the one hand and grammatical gender on the other – offers many challenges to linguistic theory.

As a reminder, I will follow Rodina's (2008) classification of the exceptional nouns. She has subdivided the four noun classes under investigation into nouns in obligatory contexts (common gender nouns, male terms and male names ending in a vowel) and nouns in variable contexts (hybrids, female names ending in a consonant). Rodina (2008) presents convincing evidence for the categorical, cognitive status of nouns in obligatory contexts and the importance of the socio-cultural experience for nouns in variable contexts (p. 64, p. 115). These factors determine not only the different acquisition processes, but also the different challenges for Russian bilinguals whose language input is restricted if compared to monolingual native speakers. Especially interesting for my research is the fact that normally only nouns in variable contexts take mixed agreement patterns, although both noun types are characterised by form-meaning mismatch.

During the discussion of the results, it is important to keep in mind that nouns in obligatory contexts normally do not take mixed agreement. So, the choice of agreement patterns with these nouns is more transparent and less complicated if compared to nouns in variable contexts. It is always semantically motivated, and "overrides" morphological gender factor (Corbett, 1988, p.14). With this in mind, I expect that heritage speakers will not have many problems with this class of nouns.

Before I start with the discussion of results for nouns in obligatory contexts, let me summarily repeat my predictions, outlined in subchapter 5.5.

Firstly, based on Benmamoun et al.'s idea of lexico-grammatical correlation, I predicted that the use of gender agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts depends greatly on speakers' proficiency level (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 22; Benmamoun et al., 2013b, p. 135). Semantic or lexical gender agreement is the first choice of monolingual native speakers with these nouns. However, from the studies of Laleko (2018, 2019) and Rodina

(2008) it follows that morphological or formal criterion of gender assignment is easier and quicker to acquire, so that the less experienced speakers prefer formal agreement patterns. That is why I predicted that the participants, who showed worse results in the translation task of my test, will tend to use morphological agreement. Those participants, whose results were better, will behave target-like, that is to say, they will choose lexical agreement. Both the tendency to prefer morphological agreement patterns with nouns in obligatory contexts by intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers and the tendency towards target-like language behaviour of advanced heritage speakers are expected.

Secondly, I predicted that both advanced and intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers will make more errors with common gender nouns than with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. I made this prediction on the basis of the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Sorace, 2011), according to which referential gender should represent a more difficult problem for a bilingual speaker, because its gender assignment and gender agreement involve more than one language interface (syntax, pragmatics), whereas male names and male terms become their gender directly from vocabulary. So, I expect that heritage speakers will show better results with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, than with common gender nouns.

6.2. The Role of Speakers' Proficiency Level in the Use of Gender Agreement Patterns.

Let me begin with the verification of my first prediction. As a reminder, I expect that the use of gender agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts depends on the speakers' proficiency level.

The outcomes of my study show some clear tendencies. First of all, there is almost no difference in the results of the Russian monolingual native speakers and the Russian first generation immigrants. Both groups of speakers prefer semantic agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts, showing no problems with form-meaning mismatch. To be precise, the native speakers used masculine (semantic) agreement in 91 percent of cases with common gender nouns and in 99 percent of cases with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. The first generation immigrants used semantic agreement in 95 percent of cases with common gender nouns and in 100 percent of cases with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*.

Table 10. Semantic Agreement with Nouns in Obligatory Contexts: Native Speakers.

Common gender nouns	91%
Male names and male terms ending in <i>-a/ -ja</i>	99%

Table 11. Semantic Agreement with Nouns in Obligatory Contexts: First Generation Immigrants.

Common gender nouns	95%
Male names and male terms ending in <i>-a/ -ja</i>	100%

Interestingly enough, the results of the first generation immigrants are slightly better than the results of the native speakers. One of the explanations for this atypical case scenario could be the greater diligence of the immigrants compared to the native speakers, who use only one major language in everyday life. The first generation immigrants, who were tested for this study, preserve target-like language mastery. It could be supposed that they do not rely on their native speaker's intuition as much as the monolingual native speakers, because they are aware of being influenced by the majority language. If this is in fact the case, then the first generation immigrants used both their intuition and memorised grammar rules in order to complete the test, which resulted in the over-correctness of their answers.

Another reason for this unusual difference in the results of the two groups of speakers could lie in different input. Due to immigration and dominance of the German language, the first generation immigrants use the above-considered nouns less often compared to the native speakers. It may be speculated that because of this, they face less situations of negative input, which takes place in uneducated colloquial speech. As a result, they have less errors. All in all, whatever the reason may be, I am not going to concentrate on this question, because the presented divergence in the results of the two groups of speakers is minimal.

The evidence, that the semantic criterion dominates in my participants' results, satisfies the Corbett's (2015a) semantic principle, repeated here for convenience: "In the normal situation, semantic factors override formal characteristics in the assignment of morphosyntactic feature values. Thus Latin *nauta* 'sailor' is masculine, since its meaning takes precedence over its inflectional morphology. Similarly all the agreements of Russian

djadja ‘uncle’ are masculine, following its meaning, even though it inflects in a manner typical of a feminine noun” (p. 2). In other words, form-meaning conflict in gender assignment is resolved by the semantic criterion, which takes precedence over the morphological rule of gender assignment (Corbett, 2007, p. 264; Corbett, 1991, p. 38; Corbett & Fraser, 2000, p. 307).

Now, I am going to return to my main question of whether Russian heritage speakers can achieve target-like proficiency in the Russian language. The results of my study answer this question with a yes. In particular, the advanced heritage speakers chose semantic agreement in 86 percent of cases with common gender nouns and in 99 percent of cases with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. This language behaviour corresponds to the target. However, I should admit that the dominance of semantic agreement with common gender nouns is weaker than with male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. I will come back to this issue later.

Table 12. Semantic Agreement with Nouns in Obligatory Contexts: Advanced Heritage Speakers.

Common gender nouns	86%
Male names and male terms ending in <i>-a/ -ja</i>	99%

If one accounts for the intermediate-to-advanced speakers, who participated in my study, it becomes evident that the use of semantic agreement in the situations of form-meaning mismatch remains dominant in their language, even though it is significantly lower. Semantic agreement with nouns denoting men and having feminine endings reaches 91 percent, which can be considered target-like. However, common gender nouns are used with semantic (that is masculine) gender agreement in 65 percent of cases by the less proficient group of heritage speakers. So, the increase of morphological agreement patterns in gender conflict situations by the less proficient speakers is observed.

Table 13. Semantic Agreement with Nouns in Obligatory Contexts: Intermediate-to-advanced Heritage Speakers.

Common gender nouns	65%
Male names and male terms ending in <i>-a/ -ja</i>	91%

To conclude these results, I underline that advanced heritage speakers can achieve target-like proficiency with nouns in obligatory contexts. I have showed that male names and male terms ending in a vowel do not represent problems for heritage speakers. Common gender nouns are also used target-like by the advanced heritage speakers, although a slight divergence to the target language can be observed. The only exception is represented by the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers: although semantic agreement takes precedence in their use of nouns in question, its use is substantially lower. It shows that the use of semantic agreement by heritage speakers decreases with their proficiency level. So, my first prediction with regard to nouns in obligatory contexts is borne out.

If I am on the right track and the importance of semantic gender cues decreases with language proficiency, then it can be expected that low-level heritage speakers prefer formal agreement with the nouns under consideration. Really, the studies of Polinsky (2008), who worked with low-level heritage speakers in the USA, and of Laleko (2019) show that the principles of gender assignment of these speakers differ from those of monolinguals in the “prevalence of formal (specifically, phonological) factors in gender categorization in heritage Russian” (Laleko, 2019, p. 161). More than that, Polinsky’s participants, whose proficiency level of Russian is very low, lose declension classes in their grammar system. Doing so, they restructure gender category drastically.

Similarly, Rodina (2008) conducts an experiment on gender assignment with nouns in obligatory contexts with children. She comes to the conclusion that the use of formal criteria in the process of gender assignment depends on age. The younger and less experienced the children are, the more attention they pay to formal criteria in gender assignment.

Notably, Rodina (2008) goes further and contradicts the Corbett’s (2015a) idea of the precedence of semantic agreement in gender conflict situations. The linguist claims that this idea does not correspond to the results of her study on children’s gender acquisition (Rodina, 2008, p. 178). Following Chomsky’s Universal Grammar (1986), Rodina (2008) considers that children are innately predisposed to look for gender cues on the nouns they use and to generalize these cues on other nouns promptly (as cited in Rodina, 2008, p. 178). In addition, Rodina (2008) considers the fact that formal gender cues are grammar-internal or implicit. That is why they are easier to learn and to integrate into a language system than semantic cues, which are “extra-grammatical”. After all, semantic cues presuppose knowledge of natural gender and some social experience in order to be acquired and that takes time (p. 179).

Based on these considerations, Rodina (2008) concludes that her data from Russian suggest that “morphology is not merely a supplement to semantics, but a very powerful factor from the first language learner’s point of view” (p. 175). Furthermore, she considers formal criterion to represent “the governing factor” in gender assignment, “crucial for the establishment of the gender system in a language” (Rodina, 2008, p. 176, p. 184).

With regard to the results of my study, I cannot claim that the morphological criterion plays such a crucial role in gender assignment. I consider that it depends on the age of the participants. Young adults have more social experience than young children and can operate with semantic criterion in gender assignment more freely. However, I agree with Rodina (2008) in that morphological agreement can play a very important role in gender categorisation. The studies of Rodina (2008) and Polinsky (2008) show that this is certainly true for children and low-level adult heritage speakers.

The question of the reasons for the dominance of morphological gender cues in the language of less experienced speakers arises. This question runs like a red thread through many works on the research of gender in Russian. Because grammar-internal computation is easier than grammar-external one, Laleko (2018) considers morphological agreement to be “more economical in processing terms” (p. 248). Moreover, she supposes that limited vocabularies of bilingual speakers can force them to rely on only formal gender cues (Laleko, 2019, p. 172). Rodina (2008) highlights clarity, consistency, innateness and the unimportance of social factors as the main reasons for greater simplicity of morphological gender assignment rule (p. 178). Hence, morphological gender assignment is considered to be simpler and therefore more comprehensible for less proficient speakers. This fact, in turn, confirms the tendency to simplification as the main reason for the language restructuring of heritage speakers (Benmamoun et al., 2010, p. 42; Levin, 1996; Laleko, 2010; Polinsky, 2008; Montrul, 2009). Language simplification was observed in numerous language aspects, predominantly in morphology and syntax (case, gender, number, mood, subjunctive clauses, and others). It is important to note that language simplification does not automatically mean that language elements disappear, making the language less problematic. As pointed out by Levin (1996) and Laleko (2010), simplification can also include insertion of redundant elements into the language system (for example, in order to avoid pro-drop situations) or the use of new strategies in resolving language conflict situations (for example, the preference of formal gender cues in agreement patterns) (Levin, 1996, p. 118; Laleko, 2010, p. 67). So, language simplification can be considered to be a powerful tool of language reanalysis.

Let me now turn to a more detailed comparison of my results for nouns in obligatory contexts with the results of similar studies, those of Laleko (2018, 2019) and Rodina (2008).

As expected, the results of Rodina's (2008) investigation of young children demonstrate target-like language behaviour with nouns in obligatory contexts. The linguist's overall results show that children's production of common gender nouns, male proper names ending in a vowel and novel nouns is highly adult-like. Roughly speaking, 90 percent of the given answers were error-free (p. 99). These results largely correspond with my conclusions.

Rodina (2008) conducted tests with common gender nouns both with and without a referent for her young participants. According to Rodina (2008), children show target-like results if a referent is given: "Children can assign two genders to the same lexical item: masculine in the context of a male and feminine in the context of a female" (p. 152). Similarly, Rodina's (2008) participants have no problems in the contexts where a referent is absent (pp. 145-146). Interestingly, Rodina (2008) observes different behaviour of girls and boys in the contexts where common gender nouns are used without a referent. Girls are equally disposed to use either masculine or feminine gender agreement with these nouns. Boys, however, seem to use their own sex in gender assignment, so that they prefer masculine gender in the majority of cases (p. 152).

So, Rodina (2008) concludes her investigation with the assertion that common gender nouns are almost as easy to deal with as nouns which are assigned gender lexically. The main reason for this phenomenon lies in the consistency of input with regard to common gender nouns and in the obligation of the semantic rule of gender assignment with them (Rodina, 2008, p. 156). The fact that referential gender is more difficult to acquire, primarily due to longer distance tracking of gender value and due to the higher role of social experience, is not reflected in Rodina's study (Laleko, 2019, p. 165). This shows that straightforward and consistent input makes the acquisition of common gender nouns fast and permanent. More than that, young children can already differentiate common gender nouns and possess the knowledge that they can be used with two genders (Rodina, 2008, p. 152).

However, the situation becomes more intriguing if Laleko's (2018, 2019) research is considered. Similar to my participants, Laleko's heritage speakers are adult advanced heritage speakers of Russian. However, unlike in my study, their contact language is English and not German. English-Russian bilinguals in Laleko's study preferred lexical agreement with the so-called opaque nouns (male terms and male names ending in a vowel), thus acting target-like (Laleko, 2019, p. 170). These outcomes seem to correspond to the results of my study. The only small difference, worth mentioning is that due to the fact that Laleko

(2018, 2019) concentrates on gender assignment problems and not on the choice of agreement patterns, her participants were rating only one gender agreement context (adjectival or verbal) at a time. Therefore, the scholar takes advantage of looking at adjectival and verbal agreement separately. She ascertains that heritage speakers use adjectival agreement target-like. However, they have a few more problems with verbal agreement, which the author explains first and foremost by longer distance dependencies in the verb phrase in comparison to the noun phrase (Laleko, 2019, p. 170). In my test, both adjectival and verbal agreement had to be chosen for every opaque noun. Due to the fact that in more than 90 percent of cases feminine agreement was avoided by my participants, I claim that heritage speakers use male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja* target-like in both adjectival and verbal agreement situations. I did not observe other problems in verbal agreement, unlike Laleko. However, the difference in our results with opaque nouns is marginal and could be explained by individual features of our participants or by the tests' peculiarities. On the whole, it can be claimed that advanced heritage speakers have no or few problems with gender agreement with male names and male terms ending in a vowel.

This being the case, let me now turn to Laleko's (2019) results with common gender nouns. The linguist's experiment shows that heritage speakers follow the formal criteria of gender assignment with common gender nouns. In her experimental study, masculine agreement had got very low ratings in the acceptability judgements, whereas feminine agreement dominated (p. 169). Laleko (2019) explains the dominance of morphological agreement by the strategy of eliminating the need to rely on extra-linguistic information with nouns, underspecified for gender. Thus, referentially ambiguous nouns are reanalysed as those by which gender specification depends on morpho-phonological properties (Laleko, 2019, p. 172). Besides, the dominance of feminine (that is morphological) agreement is equally high for both adjectival and verbal agreement.

Despite the preference of morphological agreement in the case of underspecification, Laleko (2019) notices the differences in feminine agreement with common gender nouns and with lexically feminine nouns. She found statistically significant contrasts in the use of feminine agreement with these two types of nouns. Interestingly, no such difference is found in the results of the second language learners, who showed almost identical behaviour with both noun groups under consideration. Thus, although "heritage language speakers experience greater difficulty in contexts targeting referential agreement, they nevertheless retain the fundamental distinction between lexical and referential principles in gender assignment" (Laleko, 2019, p. 169).

As previously mentioned, advanced heritage speakers in my study clearly preferred masculine agreement with common gender nouns. They used masculine agreement patterns in 86 percent of cases, which is close to the target. To recap, monolingual native speakers used lexical agreement in 91 percent of the given tasks. At first sight, there seems to be a contradiction in Laleko's results. Although her participants preserved the distinction between lexical and referential principles in gender assignment, they predominantly used morphological (feminine) agreement with common gender nouns.

However, a detailed consideration of our two studies shows that common gender nouns are examined from different angles in our tests. Indeed, Laleko's (2019) common gender nouns represent the problem of underspecification by her participants. The sentences, which she presented to heritage speakers, give no indications as to gender of nouns. Laleko's participants do not have a similar choice with common gender nouns and with opaque nouns. In the case of opaque nouns, they had to choose between lexical and morphological gender assignment. In the case of common gender nouns, they had only morphological cues. They had to assign gender based on the nouns' form and on the experience they already had with given nouns, if they had had any. As common gender nouns are seldom used in Russian, heritage speakers do not get enough input to be able to rely on gender assignment cues other than those which are morphological.

Thus, Laleko (2018, 2019) concludes her study by the assertion that heritage speakers prefer semantic criterion of gender assignment to formal criterion in gender conflict situations (for instance, with such nouns as *papa* "dad", *djadja* "uncle"). However, they prefer formal criterion of gender assignment to referential if there is a form-meaning conflict (for instance, with common gender nouns referring to males) (Laleko, 2018, p. 259). So, Laleko (2018) suggests that her participants reanalyse common gender nouns as compatible with only one noun gender value, namely feminine, on the basis of the morphological gender assignment criterion (p. 249).

I consider that it is important to differentiate between the heritage speakers' use of common gender nouns in the situations with and without a referent, because these situations represent different types of gender conflicts. If Laleko (2018, 2019) is on the right track, then heritage speakers are sensitive to the problem of underspecification. However, I show in my study that advanced heritage speakers chose target-like agreement patterns with common gender nouns in discourse, thus having no problems in any natural communication situation.

My participants were given particular contexts in the test, so that a referent was known. The task for the heritage speakers in my study was not that of gender assignment. They had to choose the most preferable gender agreement pattern in the situation of the

competition of different gender cues. Obviously, my participants and the participants of Laleko (2018, 2019) were facing different challenges. The Russian-English heritage speakers from Laleko's study had to deal with the problem of underspecification, whereas the Russian-German heritage speakers, who participated in my investigation, had to resolve form-meaning conflicts and choose the appropriate gender agreement patterns. This conflict, however, differs from the form-meaning conflict of male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*. In particular, the latter nouns display the conflict between form and lexical meaning, whereas the common gender nouns represent the conflict between form and referential meaning.

Certainly, other reasons could also play some role in the difference in the results of the two studies. Let me discuss them briefly below.

First of all, the different approaches to the evaluation of the participant's proficiency level (questionnaire and self-ratings versus questionnaire and translation task) can lead to the difference in the understanding of the notion 'advanced'. It is certainly difficult to apply standard language proficiency levels (CEFR*, ACTFL**, Cactus) to heritage speakers. Therefore, most linguists presumably only call their participants 'advanced' or 'proficient', in order to give some kind of description to their language mastery more or less accurately. Yet still, this difference does not seem to play an important role in the differences in the results of the two studies in question. If the proficiency level of participants were of importance, it would be evident in the results of the other classes of nouns (hybrids, male terms and male names ending in a vowel, female names ending in a consonant), which is not the case.

Secondly, the differences in methodology can also result in different outcomes. Laleko (2018, 2019) uses acceptability ratings for experimental items involving sentences with gender-matched and gender-mismatched controller-target combination, having only one target at a time. In contrast, I preferred fill-the-gap tasks, in which every controller is used with both adjectival and verbal target. However, if methodology were to play such an important role in the differences in our results, it would have influenced the results with male terms and male names ending in a vowel, female names ending in a consonant and hybrid nouns at least to some momentous degree. Yet, this is not the case. Moreover, the outcomes of Rodina's (2008) experiments, which differ both from mine and Laleko's (2018, 2019), also contradict Laleko's conclusions with common gender nouns. Recall that Rodina (2008) used the elicited production technique in eight experimental tasks, adapted for children.

Another reason for the different results in the two studies could lie in the different contact languages of our participants, which are German and English. To recall, German has

a well-defined German category, while English does not. Truly, there is much evidence in linguistic theory for the fact that bilinguals, whose first language does not have grammatical gender, find gender agreement more difficult to acquire than those, whose first language has gender (Schwartz et al., 2014; Dieser, 2009). English differs from German in that English has a restricted gender system with a small number of productive inflectional classes. More than that, English does not distinguish between grammatical genders and has no gender agreement. On the contrary, German's three gender system is similar to the Russian despite several differences. So, one would assume that Russian-German bilinguals would show better results than Russian-English speakers. Nevertheless, I do not consider language transfer to be the reason for the target-like results of my participants. Firstly, in most gender conflict situations in German, morphological gender criterion wins over semantic criterion (for example, *das Mädchen* "the girl"). Conversely, the target-like language behaviour of my participants with common gender nouns lies in the preference of semantic criterion to the formal one. Secondly, the phenomenon of common gender nouns is rare and is not present in the German language in the way it is presented in Russian. Thirdly, advanced heritage speakers show no influence of language transfer with other nouns in obligatory contexts, that is male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*.

So, I consider that advanced heritage speakers show target-like language behaviour in gender conflict situations with nouns in obligatory contexts. However, as shown by Laleko (2019), they have problems in the contexts of underspecification.

6.3. Referential Gender Assignment versus Lexical Gender Assignment.

All in all, it is clear now that heritage speakers are able to use nouns in obligatory contexts on a par with monolingual Russian native speakers, despite gender conflict situations. The probability of the target-like use of these nouns, depends on the speakers' language proficiency. However, there is a noticeable difference between the results for male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja* and for common gender nouns in my research, to which more attention should be paid. As a reminder, common gender nouns become gender referentially, whereas nouns denoting the male and ending in a vowel, are assigned lexical gender. The fact that referential gender is more complicated than lexical gender has already been mentioned in chapter 2. It can be explained, for instance, by the differences between grammar-internal versus grammar-external computation (Laleko, 2018, p. 248) and through

the Interface Hypothesis which stresses the role of the syntax-pragmatics interface in the vulnerability of linguistic items (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Sorace, 2011).

In my investigation, heritage speakers had to consider context in order to choose appropriate gender agreement patterns on adjectival and verbal targets. It is, as a task, easier than having to assign gender in the context of underspecification, but it is still more complicated and takes longer than the “immediate” gender assignment with nouns with inherent gender. This difference is notable in the results of my participants. Intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used the referentially correct masculine agreement in 65 percent of cases; advanced heritage speakers did much better and preferred masculine agreement in 86 percent of tasks. However, these results are worse than those with nouns denoting male gender and ending in a vowel (the advanced heritage speakers gave 99 percent of the answers that were correct, while the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers gave 91 percent of the correct answers).

So, heritage speakers make more errors with referential gender assignment than with lexical gender assignment. Herewith, those participants, whose proficiency level is lower, show the clearest difference in the use of these nouns. The monolingual native speakers and the first generation immigrants do not show this difference, however. Please recall that the native speakers used common gender nouns referring to males correctly in 91 percent of cases. The first generation immigrants used them errorless in 95 percent of the cases. These results are worse than the results with male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja*, but this difference is not sufficient (the native speakers managed 99 percent of the tasks with these nouns, the first generation immigrants made no errors at all).

Another interesting idea, which is indicative of the greater difficulties in the use of common gender nouns, is an important though debatable opinion as to a more complicated semantic structure of common gender nouns. Let me start with Rodina’s (2008) observation of a more complicated structure of common nouns as compared to proper names: “semantic representation of proper names differs crucially from the semantic representation of common nouns. First, a proper name picks out a specific individual, while a common noun introduces a kind of individual (an individual of a class). Second, unlike a common noun, which has an indefinite number of referents, a proper name has just one. Most importantly, a proper name appears to lack internal semantic structure, i.e. it does not describe the object it refers to, which is what a common noun does. For example, if someone is called *Vanja*, the hearer can infer that the person called *Vanja* is male. However, it is not simply a male that comes in

association with *mužčina* “man”, but also an adult male. Thus, proper names form a discrete semantic class, distinct from the class of common nouns” (p. 107-108).

So, the semantic structure of common nouns is more difficult than that of proper names. However, I am more interested in similar linguistic discussions about the greater complexity of the semantic structure of common gender nouns in comparison to proper names and other lexically gendered nouns. It means that all nouns in obligatory contexts can be involved in the discussion and not only proper names. The more complicated structure of common gender nouns could be a good explanation as to why heritage speakers treat them with more difficulty.

It seems that the issue of the semantic complexity of common gender nouns is becoming more and more popular among Slavonic scholars. For example, the position of Pavlova (2011) is of interest. The linguist claims that common gender nouns have two *semes*, that is the smallest of the semantic units: an obligatory semantic unit *person*, *individual* and the unit, which characterizes the person (Pavlova, 2011, p. 5, pp. 29-32). Interestingly, the scholar argues that the functions of the characterisations expressed by common gender nouns can change depending on the genre or context they are used in. For example, common gender nouns are mostly used to display personal evaluation in colloquial speech, greater expressiveness in publicistic genre and hyperbolised characteristics in literature.

Gorbatskaja (2013) also stresses the expressive and descriptive functions of common gender nouns as the most important. However, the Russian scholar does not account for the different genres, but for the communication situations as the main trigger for using common gender nouns. Depending on the communication function of a noun, native speakers can assign masculine or feminine gender to it. In brief, according to this view, common gender nouns are not neuter with respect to gender, but have particular gender associations in their meaning. For example, some common gender nouns are determined as predominantly masculine gender (for example, *verzila* “a big one”, *zadira* “bully”), because the characters they express are more typical for men than for women. Other nouns are determined as feminine, because the descriptions they express are typical for women (for example, *nedotroga* “touchy person”, *rěva* “crybaby”, *pyška* “fat girl”). Such determinations depend on the socio-cultural experiences of speakers.

The role of the socio-cultural experience in gender assignment of common gender nouns is also found in Neščeretova (2015). The author rejects the idea of gender underspecification of common gender nouns (Neščeretova, 2015, p. 3). She considers that every noun has some particular dominant unit of meaning in its structure. For example,

kollega “colleague” → masculine, *koketka* “coquette” – feminine. The word colleague is masculine by default, but can be referentially feminine, the word coquette is feminine by default, but can be masculine referentially. This unit of meaning can be either stable (strong) or unstable (weak) (Neščeretova, 2015, p. 3). Moreover, Neščeretova (2015) considers similar examples of the dominant lexical gender value in other languages. For example, German *Vielfraß* “hog” is more typical for males whereas *Zieraffe* “dandy” is more typical for females, although both of these words can have masculine and feminine referents (Neščeretova, 2015, p. 5). It should be noticed that gender agreement in German is considered to be easier for language learners, than that of Russian, because German is always morphologically marked with the help of the article.

In her considerations, Netscheretova (2015) follows Golev (2013), whose main concern is that common gender nouns are not genderless. Golev (2013) considers that from the point of view of semantics common gender nouns have a dominant gender value. Additionally, they can be interpreted as if having another gender value (for instance, *povesa* “scapecrane”, *trjapka* “wuss” can be interpreted as masculine, *pila* “grouchy woman” – as feminine) (Golev, 2013, pp. 18-19). This dominant gender seme in common gender nouns can have either stronger (*chochotuška* “laughter” – feminine gender seme is strong) or weaker (*koketka* “coquette” – feminine gender seme is weak) realisation (Golev, 2013, p. 23-24). However, Golev (2013) also acknowledges that there are true common gender nouns, which do not have dominant gender value (*sud’ja* “judge”, *osoba* “person”) (Golev, 2013, p. 17).

All in all, the idea of there being some particular default meaning of common gender nouns has been actively discussed in linguistic literature. It is difficult for scholars to accept that there are nouns without any inherent meaning. Such views in linguistics make common gender nouns out to be a noun class similar to hybrids. Referring back, hybrids can refer to both males and females, but their default meaning remains masculine.

However, if this were the case and common gender nouns had an inherent dominant gender value, inexperienced speakers such as children or heritage speakers would be expected to prefer this gender value in conflict situations. Yet, this is not the case that is revealed in my study. Thereby, my study does not find any empirical evidence to support the theory of a dominant seme in common gender nouns. According to my experiment, both monolinguals and bilinguals use common gender nouns almost entirely referentially. Equally, Rodina’s (2008) results also show that children have no unexpected preferences in using common gender nouns. They use them target-like. Laleko’s (2018, 2019) participants follow

formal criterion in gender assignment to common gender nouns in the contexts of underspecification, which also does not support the idea of a dominant semantic unit.

Undoubtedly, the idea of a dominant meaning component is of interest and should be paid more attention to in future research. Most notably, more experimental studies should be done in order to prove or disprove the existence of a default gender in common gender nouns. However, for now I will follow those scholars who consider that common gender nouns lack inherent lexical gender (Laleko, 2018; Rodina, 2008; Zaliznjak, 1964). I agree with the idea of Zaliznjak (1964), according to which, each common gender noun is represented by one seme (the smallest unit of meaning), which can potentially denote both genders and realizes its meaning only in context. In my opinion, any additional meaning of common gender nouns has historical and socio-cultural reasons and can be different depending on the geographical location, education and other personal circumstances of a speaker (p. 27). Hence, speakers can have some associations with common gender nouns, but I do not consider these associations to be a part of their semantic meaning. The empirical studies as described above confirm this view.

An interesting idea, which also touches on the question of semantic associations is expressed by Motschenbacher (2010). Following the poststructuralist framework, the scholar introduces the notion of *social gender*. On the whole, Motschenbacher (2010) differentiates between four types of gender: lexical, grammatical, referential and social gender. The three former gender types are widely known and have already been discussed in this thesis. Social gender refers to lexically gender-neuter personal nouns, but are perceived as those relating to some particular gender. Strictly speaking, social gender is motivated by social stereotypes, which can be stronger or weaker, depending on the epoch and country the speakers live in. Motschenbacher (2010) explains social gender with the English examples *nurse* and *doctor*. Both men and women can work as nurses and as doctors. However, due to social gender stereotypes, feminine gender is spontaneously associated by the speaker with regard to the former word and masculine gender is mostly used with the latter one (Motschenbacher, 2010, pp. 32-34). As social gender cannot be deduced from the noun form and is mostly prescribed to semantically neuter nouns, the author calls it *covert gender*. There are few cases in which gender value “surfaces only occasionally” through anaphoric pronouns (like *This is a nurse. She...*) or opposite-gender marking (*male nurse*) (Motschenbacher, 2010, pp. 64-65). Recall the similar above-mentioned example of *koketka* “coquette”, which can relate to both men and women, but which is associated more with females than males.

Although, social gender as Motschenbacher (2020) understands it, is a complicated gender category, typical not only for lexically neuter nouns, but sometimes also for those,

which have gender, I consider it to be the most applicable explanation of meaning associations with common gender nouns. Motschenbacher's (2010) representation of social gender as covert gender resembles the phenomena, described by the Slavonic scholars. However, Motschenbacher (2010) does not consider social gender to be a part of a noun's semantic structure. The author believes that nouns, which can be considered to have social gender are semantically and morphologically neuter for gender (Motschenbacher, 2010, pp. 64-65).

By and large, the topic of the gender structure of common gender nouns is very broad. It is definitely beyond the scope of this work and is a matter for future research.

For the time being, I shall consider that my participants showed better results with male names and male terms ending in a vowel than with common gender nouns, because of the greater difficulty of referential gender assignment as compared to lexical. Stereotypical associations with common gender nouns depend on historical and social factors and do not constitute a part of their semantic structure.

6.4. Conclusion.

To conclude this chapter, let me manifest the most important issues on nouns in obligatory contexts, which can be postulated on the basis of the results of my study:

1. Advanced heritage speakers can achieve target-like proficiency with nouns in obligatory contexts.
2. The target-like use of semantic agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts depends on proficiency level of heritage speakers.
3. Common gender nouns are more difficult for heritage speakers because of their referentiality.
4. Correct use of referential gender agreement depends on the social experience of a speaker.

Similar to Rodina's (2008) participants, my heritage speakers appear to be sensitive to classes of nouns, depending on categorical versus variable environments (p. 3, p. 136). Generally, nouns in obligatory contexts do not seem to represent a very big problem for advanced heritage speakers, independent of gender category (lexical, referential). There are only some difficulties with this as presented in the results of the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers, which can be explained by their limited social experience. The situation differs with nouns in variable contexts. Due to their variability, these nouns represent a bigger challenge for bilinguals. I shall explain this in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 7. Discussion of Results with Regard to Nouns in Variable Contexts.

7.1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, I asserted that advanced heritage speakers can achieve target-like proficiency with nouns in obligatory contexts. The choice of agreement patterns with these nouns strongly depends on the speakers' proficiency level. The more proficient speakers (control group of speakers, baseline speakers, advanced heritage speakers) prefer semantic agreement, whereas less proficient speakers tend to use syntactic agreement. Thus, the overall picture with nouns in obligatory contexts seems to be explicit and comprehensible. The use of agreement patterns with them reflects Corbett's (1991) idea of the precedence of semantic rules over syntactic rules in the process of gender assignment (Corbett, 1991, pp. 63-66; Corbett, 2015a, p. 2). In addition, the results of heritage speakers confirm the general idea of agreement as the determining criterion of gender (Corbett, 1991, p. 4). Agreement patterns, used with nouns in obligatory contexts by my participants, match their genders.

Yet, nouns, which I am going to discuss in this chapter, break these grammatical rules and principles. They do not "fit into any of the main genders" (Corbett, 1988, p. 8). These nouns are hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. The most important reason for the unusualness of these nouns is the inconsistency of the agreement patterns they take (Corbett, 1988, p. 10). As follows, agreement does not help to recognise nouns' gender, which can cause confusion. Corbett (2015a) gives a simple explanation of the problem that hybrids represent: "Hybrids are more complex: assignment is not uniquely determined in favour of one particular value. Thus German *Mädchen* 'girl' is not fully neuter nor fully feminine, since it does not take the consistent agreement pattern of either gender: hence it is a hybrid" (Corbett, p. 2).

Following Rodina (2008), I refer to hybrids and to female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* as to nouns in variable contexts. This means that these nouns presuppose some variability in agreement. In particular, they allow not only masculine and feminine agreement, but also mixed agreement, which is of importance for my investigation.

Nouns in variable contexts are combined in one group due to the following similarities. As mentioned above, their gender features represent examples of a form-meaning mismatch.

Besides, they allow optionality in gender agreement. Next, gender of nouns in question can be differentiated only in the nominative case singular. In oblique cases, syntactic (that is masculine) agreement is used. Lastly, gender acquisition of nouns in variable contexts is a long, complicated process. Rodina (2008) clearly shows that the semantic rule with nouns in obligatory contexts is categorical, whereas the semantic rule with nouns in variable contexts depends on the socio-cultural awareness of a speaker and is variable (p. 14, p. 55, p. 66).

Hence, it is comprehensible that hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* belong to one group of nouns. Yet still, the two noun classes have some important differences, which can play a deciding role in the choice of agreement patterns. One of these differences lies in their semantic structure.

During the discussion of proper names in chapter 6, I explained that male names ending in *-a/ -ja* have a simple semantic structure. Each of them denotes one specific individual and does not give any additional characteristics to this individual. Likewise, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* have a rather simple semantic structure. However, contrary to male names ending in a vowel, female names in question are used with the suffixes *-ik/ -ok*, which also express some meaning. In particular, the diminutive and caressing connotations of these suffixes are most important for my study. Aside from that, the suffixes in question are able to change the whole meaning of the word (for example, *kuznec* “a blacksmith” → *kuzneč-ik* “a grasshopper”) or to change only one component of the word’s meaning (for example, *dom* “a house” → *dom-ik* “a small house”, *električestvo* “electricity” → *elektr-ik* “an electrician, a person who works with electricity”, *starost’* “old age” → *star-ik* “an old man”). Moreover, if the suffix *-ik* is added to an adjective, it forms a masculine noun with the meaning of a person, characterised by the features expressed by the adjective (for example, *neudačnyj* “unsuccessful” → *neudačn-ik* “a loser, an unsuccessful person”, *gruzovoj* “freight” → *gruzov-ik* “a truck, a freight transport”).

In short, suffixes *-ik/ -ok* are characterised by a variety of meanings, which they transfer to the noun stems that they are added to. However, it is important to mention that suffixes *-ik/ -ok* are generally added to masculine nominal stems. The group of female names in question represents an exception to this rule.

Compared to female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, hybrids are much more complicated semantically. First and foremost, hybrids are assigned gender in context, that is to say referentially. As mentioned during the discussion of common gender nouns, referential gender demands discourse-level computation, which represents more difficulties for

language learners and heritage speakers than gender assignment within the internal grammar system (Sorace & Filiaci, 2006; Laleko, 2019).

Another issue, relevant for hybrid nouns, is the generic component of their semantic structure. It is well-known that hybrids can refer to both males and females and that they can additionally denote sex-neuter individuals as members of a class or a group. Conversely, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* have only one specific referent and lack any generic meaning. Bunames (2014) points out that generic characteristics of hybrids lead to the semantic asymmetry of these nouns (p. 14). To be precise, masculine gender plays a more important role in hybrids' syntactic and semantic structure.

Thus, hybrids referring to females represent a conflict between their grammatical form and their referential meaning and have an additional generic meaning component. Instead, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* represent a conflict between their grammatical form and their inherent lexical meaning. As a result, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* seems to be a less complicated noun class than hybrids.

Considering the semantic structure of nouns in variable contexts, some parallels to nouns in obligatory contexts can be distinguished. For instance, the group of nouns in obligatory contexts also includes two noun classes, one of which has an inherent lexical meaning (male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja*) and another one has a referential meaning (common gender nouns). As shown in chapter 6, both monolingual Russian native speakers and advanced heritage speakers ignored the difference between lexical and referential meanings and chose semantic agreement patterns with most of these nouns. However, less proficient speakers (intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers) made more errors with nouns with referential gender. This fact approves the more problematic status of discourse factors in gender assignment.

With reference to nouns in obligatory contexts, it should be mentioned that they can have either masculine or feminine agreement. Yet, they are usually not used with mixed agreement. The results described in chapter 6 confirm this claim. Therefore, the investigation of nouns in variable contexts, which allow the testing of all three agreement patterns is of a special interest for the goals of this thesis.

As a reminder, mixed agreement is an exceptional agreement pattern, which consists of adjectival (inward-looking) and verbal (outward-looking) agreement that do not coincide. As related to hybrids, Laleko (2019) emphasises that mixed agreement involves "a competition between formal and referential factors in the categorization of hybrid noun" (p. 170). Similarly, I believe that there is a competition between formal and lexical criteria in the categorisation of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. Notably, formal or syntactic criterion

usually prevails in the adjectival position, whereas semantic criterion dominates in verbal agreement. It is very clear from these observations that Russian mixed agreement obeys the principles formulated in Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy (1979), which claims that syntactic agreement is more likely to occur to the left of the noun (attributive position), while semantic agreement is more common to the right of the noun (predicative position). For more detailed information about the Agreement Hierarchy of Corbett, see chapter 2.

Let me now start with the discussion of the results of my participants regarding nouns in variable contexts. First of all, I would like to recapitulate the main predictions about the use of agreement patterns with nouns in variable contexts, formulated in chapter 5.

To begin with, I expect that heritage speakers will show more divergence with hybrids referring to females than with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, because of the hybrids' more complicated semantic structure.

Secondly, I assume that my participants will make no errors with nouns in variable contexts. The reasons for this assumption lie in the high proficiency level of my participants and in the optionality in gender agreement for nouns in variable contexts. Yet still, I predict that heritage speakers' choice of agreement patterns with nouns in variable contexts will diverge from that of monolingual native speakers, because of the limited language input that bilinguals become as compared to monolinguals. As previously mentioned, the phenomenon of the grammatically correct use of linguistic structures by heritage speakers, which nevertheless differs from the use of these structures in a target language has been explicitly described by Laleko (2010). Laleko (2010) calls this phenomenon *covert restructuring*. On the example of the use of perfective and imperfective verbal aspect by heritage Russian speakers in the USA, she demonstrates that a grammatical reorganization of language should not necessarily be manifested in overt errors (p. ii).

Thirdly, I predict that those participants who showed better results in the translation task will use more mixed agreement patterns than the less proficient participants. Truly, mixed agreement requires both the knowledge of semantic and syntactic agreement criteria and the ability to combine these criteria. Moreover, it needs a sufficient input, which is a general problem of heritage speakers.

Last but not least, I expect that the less proficient participants will tend to use masculine (formal, morphological) agreement patterns with nouns in question, because these structures are easier to acquire (see subchapters 4.2.4, 4.3.1). On the other hand, I predict that the more proficient and experienced speakers will prefer mixed and semantic agreement patterns.

7.2. The Results of the Monolingual Native Speakers and of the First Generation Immigrants.

I would like to continue the discussion with the results of the monolingual participants. As will be shown below, these results are no less interesting than the results of heritage speakers.

Both the monolingual native speakers and the first generation speakers showed similar results with nouns in variable contexts. I will briefly show these results below for convenience.

Significantly, the participants predominantly chose mixed agreement patterns with hybrid nouns. Semantic (feminine) agreement is used by considerably less speakers. Formal (masculine) agreement was almost ignored by the speakers in question.

Table 14. The Use of Hybrids by Monolingual Speakers.

	Mixed agreement	Semantic agreement	Syntactic agreement
monolingual native speakers	58%	24%	15%
first generation immigrants	58%	25%	17%

Curiously, the participants' results with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* noticeably differ from their results with hybrids, although the two noun classes represent similar gender conflict. Both groups of participants undoubtedly prefer semantic agreement pattern with female names in question. The form-meaning conflict does not seem to confuse the participants.

Table 15. The Use of Female Names Ending in *-ik/ -ok* by Monolingual Speakers.

	Mixed agreement	Semantic agreement	Syntactic agreement
monolingual native speakers	11%	81%	4%
first generation immigrants	16%	83%	1%

On the basis of these results, I can conclude that the two control groups of participants attach different degrees of importance to mixed agreement with hybrids referring to females and with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. This fact, in turn, demonstrates that Russian native speakers treat the form-meaning mismatch with hybrids referring to females differently from the form-meaning mismatch with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

Both hybrids referring to females and female names ending in a consonant are masculine in form, but have feminine referents. Now, it will be interesting to find out, why native speakers of Russian interpret them in different ways. The first aspect to point out is that the two noun classes in question have dissimilar semantic structures. As mentioned above, gender of hybrids is referential, while gender of female names is lexical. Furthermore, referential gender represents a bigger problem for the processes of gender assignment and gender agreement. Considering hybrids and nouns with lexical gender, especially male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, Laleko (2019) emphasises that the form-meaning mismatch of the two noun classes represents different challenges for speakers (p. 3). The scholar argues that nouns with lexical gender involve intra-linguistic (lexical) rules in conflict resolution, whereas hybrids involve extra-linguistic (referential) rules: "While the former mechanism engages the interface between the lexicon and grammar, the latter task requires computation at the grammar-discourse interface, mastery of which may demand more time. When formal and lexical cues point in different directions, early acquirers of Russian are quick to establish the relevant ranking between them; however, the weight of the referential criteria in conflict resolution increases slowly and gradually with age as the developing gender systems mature" (Laleko, 2019, p. 160). If I applied this opinion to my results, then the problem of referentiality would explain the difference in the results of the two control groups with regard to mixed agreement with hybrids referring to females and with female names ending in a consonant. However, it is necessary to specify that Laleko (2019) considers male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, when she comes to this conclusion. These proper names differ from female

names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. They do not allow any optionality in agreement patterns and their semantic structure is simpler than that of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, because the masculine suffixes *-ik/ -ok* bear additional meaning components. This difference between the two types of proper nouns can be observed in the results of my participants: male names ending in *-a/ -ja*, which have a simple semantic structure, were used with semantic agreement in 99 to 100 percent of cases. By contrast, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* were used with semantic agreement in 81 to 83 percent of cases. All in all, I agree with Laleko (2019) in that proper names, including female names under consideration, represent an easier phenomenon for speakers than hybrids. Still, it is important to treat female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* as a separate, special class of proper names.

Considering the above-cited Laleko's (2019) argumentation, the assumption that referential gender is a more complicated phenomenon than lexical gender and that it needs more time to be acquired, could help to explain the different results with hybrids and with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. As is known, Rodina (2008) is also convinced that referentiality is an intricate phenomenon and that nouns with referential gender are acquired later than nouns with lexical gender (pp. 181-184). The question of referentiality is described in detail in Chapter 6, where I discuss common gender nouns. Truly, common gender nouns appeared to be slightly more difficult for my participants than male names ending in *-a/ -ja* because of their referentiality. However, if referential nouns in obligatory contexts (common gender nouns) are compared to referential nouns in variable contexts (hybrids), important discrepancies can be distinguished. In the case of common gender nouns, both the monolingual Russian native speakers and the first generation immigrants predominantly used semantic agreement patterns (91 percent and 95 percent of semantic agreement, respectively). So, the form-meaning mismatch had no influence on their agreement choice. Thus, similar to proper names, sex is the categorical criterion for the choice of gender agreement with these nouns if a referent is given.

Likewise, hybrids were used with particular referents in my test. However, contrary to common gender nouns, my participants preferred mixed agreement patterns and not semantic agreement patterns with these nouns. For this reason, I believe that referentiality of hybrids is not the main reason for their divergence from female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

7.3. Difference in the Semantic Structure of Nouns in Variable Contexts. Genericness.

Thus, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrids referring to females represent a similar conflict: they are formally masculine, but refer to females (lexically and referentially). By the way, neither their form, nor their meaning can explain why native speakers use different agreement patterns with these two noun classes. I consider that this variability of agreement patterns can be explained by the difference in the semantic structure of these nouns. Female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* have only one main denotation. They name specific females. In contrast, hybrid nouns can either be underspecified for gender, so that their gender value varies depending on the referent (female, male) or they can be generically masculine in order to indicate individuals as members of a class.

In my opinion, the difference in the semantic structure of nouns in variable contexts is crucial for the interpretation of my results. I argue that the monolingual native speakers as well as the first generation immigrants are sensitive to both interpretations of hybrids referring to females – feminine and generic – and that they express this through mixed agreement patterns. This means that masculine agreement (or part of agreement) with hybrids referring to females does not only mirror the form or the declension class of a noun, but it also demonstrates its broader semantic interpretation (its generic component). By contrast, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* lack genericness in their semantic structure and that is why they are predominantly used with semantic (feminine) agreement by native speakers. By the way, a generic meaning component can also explain the fact that native speakers used more purely masculine agreement patterns with hybrids, than with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, which are also formally masculine. Thus, similar to nouns in obligatory contexts, agreement choice with nouns in variable contexts also depends on semantics. Formal agreement criterion does not seem to play an important role for native speakers' agreement choice with exceptional animate nouns. This conclusion is in accordance with Corbett's (1988) semantic rule.

Curiously, Rodina (2008) disagrees with Corbett's idea of the dominant role of semantic criterion in gender assignment and brings convincing evidence for the importance of morphological gender criterion in gender assignment (pp. 172-173). However, it should be admitted that the participants of Rodina's study are children, whose gender acquisition process has not been finished yet. In chapter 6, I have already shown that less experienced speakers (such as children or less proficient heritage speakers) rely on formal gender criterion much stronger than high proficient speakers. So, I claim that Corbett's semantic rule

is true for adult native speakers and, as I will show later in this chapter, that it is also true for advanced heritage speakers.

Interestingly, Corbett (2015a) considers the importance of semantic structure for the agreement with hybrids not only with respect to Russian, but also regarding German (p. 8). He establishes the relationship between the use of agreement patterns and the meaning of hybrids on the example of the German noun *das Mädchen* “the girl”. Following Krifka, Corbett (2015a) suggests that it is the more complicated semantics of hybrids, which helps to differentiate the correct agreement pattern with these nouns: “the older the girl referred to, the more likely the use of *sie*, and the younger, the more likely *es* becomes” (as cited in Corbett, 2015a, p. 5). So, hybrids also proved to have a complicated semantic structure, which plays an important role in their gender agreement, in languages other than Russian.

Let me now return to the topic of hybrids in Russian. I showed that genericness is an important characterisation of Russian hybrids. The phenomenon of genericness has been investigated by linguists for many years. Most linguists, such as, for example, Laleko (2018), explain genericness in terms of markedness theory. Truly, hybrids can be interpreted by means of Jakobson’s opposition theory. Hybrids represent the unmarked forms of an opposition, which can denote males and be underspecified for gender at the same time. Thus, they have “a more general and inclusive meaning” and represent “a wider contextual distribution” (Laleko, 2018 pp. 238-239). Considering paired hybrids, they form privative oppositions with their restrictedly used derived feminine counterparts. In this way, markedness asymmetry emerges. This phenomenon was well-described by Jakobson (1932/1984)². Later, it was successfully applied in further linguistic research. For example, following Jakobson, Bobajik and Zocca (2011) suggest that the morphological markedness asymmetry in masculine-feminine pairs has an impact on the semantic asymmetry. Morphologically marked feminine noun forms can only indicate females, whereas unmarked

² Jakobson’s most famous example of “donkey sentence” is of interest here. In order to present the distinction between a marked and an unmarked member of gender opposition, Jakobson shows different effects of very similar sentences. If the question “*Ehto osěl?*” ‘Is this a donkey?’ is asked, then two affirmative answers can be expected *Da, ehto osěl* “Yes, this is a donkey” and *Da, ehto osli-z-a* “Yes, this is a (female) donkey”. Curiously, if the question is slightly changed and the feminine form of an animal is given, then only one affirmative answer can be given: *Ehto osli-c-a?* “Is this a donkey?” - *Da, ehto osli-c-a* “Yes, this is a (female) donkey”, but **Da, ehto osěl* “*Yes, this is a (male) donkey”. As a result, asymmetrical language behaviour of female and male nouns of this type can be observed (1932/1984, pp. 2-3).

masculine forms do not only denote males, but are “in certain instances, neutral as to sex” (Bobajik & Zocca, 2011, pp. 5-6). Moreover, the linguists point to the fact that unmarked masculine noun stems “may nevertheless carry male/masculine as a part of their lexical semantics” (Bobajik & Zocca, 2011, p. 4). Summarising, the scholars make an important conclusion: “Taken together, we thus recognize a possible three-way contrast in the semantics (male vs. female vs. unspecified) even where the morphology and morphosyntax draw only a two-way distinction (feminine vs. unspecified) (Bobajik & Zocca, 2011, p. 4).

In this context, Laleko’s (2018) characterisation of hybrids as nouns of “dual status” is also of interest (p. 241). First of all, Laleko (2018) describes hybrids as having two senses: „as specifically masculine (e.g., when referring exclusively to males) or, in a truly unmarked sense, as gender-indefinite nouns that can refer either to males or females” (Laleko, 2018, p. 241). Secondly, Laleko (2018) stresses the importance of the “pre-defined grammatical gender value” of hybrids, which she also calls “a default gender specification (masculine)” as the main difference in the referentiality of hybrids and common gender nouns (p. 249). She shows that hybrids represent a greater optionality in gender agreement patterns and therefore also greater challenge for less experienced speakers, because hybrids require the activation of “multiple semantic, pragmatic, and stylistic factors” from speakers (Laleko, 2018, p. 249).

In connection with the semantic asymmetry of hybrids, it would be unfair not to mention the studies of Bunames (2014, p. 14) and Golev (2013, p. 19) who argue that hybrids are semantically asymmetrical, because the masculine (grammatical) gender value has an influence on the speaker’s comprehension of their semantic content. Bunames (2014) declares that even if hybrids refer to females, they preserve the masculine meaning component (the ability to denote male), which compels speakers to think of masculine gender unintentionally and sometimes leads to problems in communication (p. 14). Similarly, Golev (2013) counts hybrids as “originally male” nouns which have the possibility to be applied to both females and males (p. 19).

From these facts, I conclude that the grammatical masculine gender value of hybrids has an impact on their semantic structure. That is why, hybrids are always associated with males. I believe that hybrids’ generic masculine value is a part of their semantic structure. Hybrids preserve this meaning component (that is the ability to denote males) even if they refer to females. Scheme 13 demonstrates the semantic structure of a hybrid as explained above:

Scheme 13. Hybrid's semantic structure.

[[generic masculine] [[underspecified masculine][underspecified feminine]]]

The importance of hybrids' semantic structure for their agreement has been confirmed by Corbett (2015a). Looking for the reasons for the emergence of hybrids, Corbett (2015a) considers the role of the semantic criterion: "When it is stated that, as we move rightwards on the Agreement Hierarchy, we shall find more instances of semantically justified agreement, it is the more general or abstract semantic distinction which wins out. For instance, an individual may be considered in terms of a specific role (doctor, landlord and so on), but as the syntactic distance increases, so the more general semantic distinction male/female assumes a larger role. [...] So far, then, it seems that the solution to our problem of why there are hybrids might lie in the area of lexical semantics" (p. 9).

Thus, the importance of hybrids' semantics for the choice of proper agreement patterns is uncontroversial. The meaning component of "a specific role" of a referent correlates to genericness of hybrids. According to Corbett (2015a), it is not this component of hybrids' meaning, but "the more general semantic distinction male/female", which is meant by the "semantically justified agreement" rightwards on the Agreement Hierarchy (p. 9). Therefore, the idea of the influence of a generic meaning component on the use of the masculine part of mixed agreement with hybrids does not contradict Agreement Hierarchy.

Let me show the importance of the generic masculine meaning component by means of the comparison of hybrids with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and with common gender nouns. Firstly, if a speaker uses a female name ending in *-ik/ -ok*, then a feminine referent is the speaker's only association with this noun. Hence, the meaning of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* is simple.

Further, common gender nouns are assigned gender referentially. If they are used in context, they are associated only with their referents (females or males). If common gender nouns are used without a context, then their gender is completely underspecified and they should not awake any associations by a speaker. As described in chapter 6 in detail, the idea of an additional default semantic component has been expressed with regard to common gender nouns too. However, I have shown that this idea is wrong. The associations, which speakers have with respect to gender of common gender nouns, are the result of the socio-cultural experience of speakers and can vary depending on a speaker. Moreover, these

associations have no influence on the nouns' grammatical behaviour. The situation is different with hybrids. Hybrids represent clear examples of nouns with a complicated semantic structure, which results in a greater variability of gender agreement patterns and in a more complicated gender acquisition process. So, hybrids' genericness cannot be compared to the seme, that is to say the smallest unit of meaning, "person" in common gender nouns (Pavlova, 2011, p. 4). The difference between the two noun classes can be clearly illustrated by the results of Rodina's (2008) investigation with hybrids and common gender nouns used without a referent. Her participants, monolingual Russian children, obviously preferred masculine gender with hybrids used without context, but had no preference with common gender nouns and showed varied results with these nouns.

Thus, only hybrids can be considered to have an additional stable gender value, independently from the realisation of their unspecified gender value in context.

To summarise, Russian native speakers demonstrate a rather straightforward language behaviour with nouns in variable contexts. Similar to nouns in obligatory contexts, hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* are predominantly used with semantic agreement in mismatch gender contexts. Female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* take consistent gender agreement patterns, which correspond to Corbett's (1988) semantic rule and to Laleko's (2018) conclusion that "inherent lexical property has a direct grammatical manifestation: nouns that are lexically marked for gender display fixed agreement patterns" (p. 236). Hybrids referring to females are mostly used with mixed agreement patterns, due to the asymmetry in their semantic structure and due to form-meaning mismatch. Masculine form and generic meaning component force speakers to choose masculine agreement component, whereas feminine reference stimulates them to use feminine agreement. All things considered, I assert that hybrids represent the only semantically asymmetric noun class that allows representation of this asymmetry through mixed agreement.

7.4. Analytic Features in the Russian Language.

The arguments I have presented above suggest that semantic agreement plays an important role in the resolution of gender conflict with animate nouns (with both nouns in obligatory contexts and nouns in variable contexts). Other possibilities of the expression of noun's gender can be the use of a masculine or a feminine pronoun and the use of compounds and appositions (for example, *ženščina vrač* "woman doctor"). All this shows that grammatical relationships between the exceptional nouns, investigated in this thesis, are

realised with the help of semantics and with the help of addition of other words, which represent distinctive features of the development of analytic features in Russian.

By the way, common gender nouns referring to males also realise their gender feature through the agreement with surrounding words and not through their own morphological form. However, this realisation is obligatory. In the case of nouns in variable contexts, by contrast, speakers have a choice of agreement patterns. As is observed, this choice fell on semantic agreement.

Russian is considered to be a synthetic language, which means that syntactic connections within a sentence or a phrase are conveyed by inflection, derivation and agglutination processes. By contrast, analytic languages reflect the relationship within a sentence through word order or through addition of auxiliary words. Interestingly enough, more and more linguists consider that Russian is losing some of its synthetic characteristics and is becoming more analytic. For example, Bunames (2014) observes that syntactic elements, which express gender of hybrids, are losing their importance and that analytic means of gender representation are becoming strong and wide-spread. Considering hybrids referring to females, for which feminine agreement is becoming most popular, the linguist claims that there is a process of the “demasculinisation of lexeme on the level of syntagm” in the Russian language, which is a significant sign of the development of analytic features in Russian (Bunames, 2014, pp. 13-14)

With this respect, the experimental study of Gorbatskaja (2013) is of interest. The scholar deals with common gender nouns and hybrids in Russian. On the basis of the results of her study, the Slavist concludes that her participants (Russian native speakers) paid more attention to semantics and their socio-cultural experience rather than to grammar and morphology, when they chose gender agreement patterns for the nouns in question. Although Gorbatskaja (2013) notices some influence of formal criteria on the choice of her participants, she stresses the fact that their agreement choice depends first and foremost on semantics (p. 8). The scholar concludes that the norms of syntactical compatibility in Russian has changed greatly. More than that, they continue to change. The linguist sees the reasons for this change in the two main processes, typical for contemporary standard Russian. Firstly, it is the growing democratisation of the language, because of the dominant ideas of equality of sexes and of the importance of women in public life. Secondly, Gorbatskaja (2013) observes the process of the constant deviation from the existing language norms in Russian (pp. 133-161).

Golev (2013) also writes about analytic features in the development of the Russian language (p. 8). According to Golev (2013), Russian synthetic, morphological means “have

exhausted themselves” and can no longer express new language tendencies (pp. 21-22). The scholar considers that Russian formal paradigms are changing into lexico-stylistical paradigms. Strict formal syntactical connections are loosened. For example, gender agreement with hybrids is no longer strictly formal, but can be expressed analytically. Golev (2013) stresses the fact that the dominance of semantic gender agreement with animate nouns, which are not marked for gender and therefore do not show their gender value through their morphological form, is an important sign of an analytic language. As it can be seen on the example of hybrids referring to females, gender is not represented by morphological forms of nouns, but by the agreement marking on surrounding words (for example, *molod-aja vrač-ø priš-l-a “new-F doctor- \emptyset came-F”). Golev (2013) defines this new development in grammar as the “soft grammar” (p. 21). The “soft grammar” gives speakers more freedom in the choice of grammatical structures. Lexico-stylistical paradigms, that is to say connotations and style, are playing a more and more important role in the Russian language system. According to Golev (2013), these processes lead to the weakening of synthetic features in Russian. Along with this, the Russian language system becomes more ambiguous and indeterminate.*

Interestingly, although Golev (2013) concentrates on gender agreement, when he considers analytic features in Russian, he also notices that the above-described development is also common for other linguistic structures. To illustrate, the strict rules as to the use of ordinal and cardinal numerals have become more flexible: such phrases as *sideli pjat’ studentov* “five (cardinal numeral) students were sitting” and *sideli pjatero studentov* “five (ordinal numeral) students were sitting” can be interchangeable (Golev, 2013, p. 19). Similarly, there are no strict differences in the use of long and short forms of adjectives in contemporary standard Russian. As an example, the sentence *on umnyj* “he is clever (long adjectival form)” can be equivalent to the sentence *on uměn* “he is clever (short adjectival form)” (Golev, 2013, p. 21). Thus, Golev (2013) underlines that the Russian language is actively changing and shows clear characteristics of an analytic language.

All things considered, I conclude that Russian monolingual native speakers demonstrate the growing tendency of using semantic agreement patterns in mismatch gender contexts. I believe that the preference of mixed agreement with hybrids referring to females also represents the consequence of the reliance on the semantic agreement criterion (generic meaning component results in masculine adjectival agreement, while referential meaning component results in feminine verbal agreement). Following Golev (2013), I consider the fact that gender value of hybrids is marked on the words, which

surround them, but not on hybrids themselves as well as the use of referential pronouns and appositions, to be signs of analytic features in contemporary standard Russian.

So, I observe a new important tendency in the contemporary standard Russian language, namely, the development of analytic grammatical structures. I suppose that this tendency will lead to the disappearance of formal agreement patterns with animate nouns some day. However, for now this is only speculation, which needs further research.

7.5. Nouns in Variable Contexts from a Diachronic Perspective.

Grammatical rules as to correct agreement patterns with animate nouns have been changing for a long time. Hybrids deserve closer attention in this respect. As is generally known, hybrid nouns represent a rather new phenomenon in the Russian language. They have emerged in the language after the historical events (the formation of the USSR) that resulted in the equality of rights and duties of men and women. As Bunames (2014) admits, after their emergence, hybrids were used only with formal agreement patterns. Both mixed and semantic agreement were considered ungrammatical. There was no need in a feminine grammatical component in gender agreement, because there was no need in the differentiation between male and female workers (Bunames, 2014, pp. 13-14). Doleschal and Schmid (2001) also consider the times, when hybrids referring to females were predominantly used with masculine agreement patterns. The scholars describe the word-combinations, in which a woman is referred to by using masculine grammatical forms, as “awkward” (p. 9).

Later on, feminine gender agreement with hybrids became possible, but it was interpreted as the expression of a negative connotation. So, agreement patterns with hybrids seem to change with time.

One more support of the idea of hybrids’ transformation is expressed by Corbett (1985). The scholar analyses the experimental study of Panov, which was conducted in the 1960s, and reports interesting details (as cited in Corbett, 1985, pp. 30-40). He observes the dependency of the use of gender agreement patterns on the socio-cultural status of speakers. The higher the degree of education of a speaker, the less feminine agreement patterns with hybrids he or she used in Panov’s study (as cited in Corbett, 1985, pp. 34-35). According to Corbett (1985), there were times when semantic agreement with hybrids was considered to be absolutely incorrect. With time, however, semantic agreement has become more popular, especially in colloquial speech. The scholar observes the new tendency to reduce the use of masculine agreement with hybrids referring to females. He refers to those

Panov's participants, who preferred formal agreement with hybrids referring to females, as more "conservative" speakers (p. 34). These are, for example, graduates and students. Conversely, industrial workers appeared to be less strict and used more feminine agreement patterns. Besides, Corbett (1985) differentiates linguistics students, scholars and writers as the most "conservative" speakers, that is those who used the most formal agreement patterns (pp. 34-35). Moreover, Corbett (1985) pays attention to the dependency of gender agreement choice on the age of the participants. The scholar notices that younger participants used more semantic agreement patterns with hybrids, than older participants. So, the replacement of formal agreement patterns with hybrids by semantic agreement patterns was in progress already in the second half of the twentieth century.

Nowadays, the semantic agreement pattern is widely used with hybrids. This is well-described in the latest research papers in linguistics. For instance, Laskova (2001) describes the process of feminisation of contemporary standard Russian in her dissertation. The author stresses the importance of semantic gender agreement with hybrids referring to females. She considers that feminine agreement helps to express the individuality of a referent, rather than simply denoting a representative of a particular profession. Traditionally, feminisation was a way to show equality of rights. Today, this phenomenon has become a new interpretation. There is a tendency to avoid any word, which can highlight only one gender, independently of it being a male or a female. So, Laskova (2001) considers that language feminisation is being replaced by the neutralisation of a language: ethically correct words and proper pragmatic contexts have become most important in modern society.

Doleschal and Schmid (2001) also wrote about the role of hybrids in the process of language feminisation. Following the feminist approach, the linguists point out that, despite such alternative ways of the expression of female gender with hybrids as the use of personal names, personal pronouns or apposition constructions, there are still numerous restrictions as to the use of these methods. The same is true for semantic agreement, because it can be used only in the nominative case (**videla naš-u direktor-a* 'saw our-F.Acc director-M.Acc "I saw our director") and is dependent on stylistic factors (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, pp. 9-10). By contrast, masculine nouns do not have such restrictions. Moreover, masculine gender has a wider use than the feminine. In contexts, where gender is unknown or unimportant, exclusively masculine gender is used (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 10).

Doleschal and Schmid (2001) pay the reader's attention to the hot debates on the correct use of hybrids: „... normativists prefer the use of masculine nouns with masculine agreement when referring to women, while empiricists state that in informal contexts the need to mark sex (i.e. female sex) is adequately fulfilled by means of both word-formation

and agreement, i.e. female forms may be used (p. 15). The latter view is laid down in the Academy grammar of the Russian language, while the former is reflected in lexicography, where hybrid nouns are consequently classified as masculine and epicene” (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, pp. 9-10). Doleschal and Schmid wrote this in 2001. Definitely, some of these tendencies are still up-to-date. However, the results of my study as well as the researches of such linguists as Golev (2013), Bunames (2014), Gorbatskaja (2013) show that semantic agreement is becoming more and more important with hybrids. Formal agreement, however, is losing its importance drastically.

In a more recent study, McConnell-Ginet (2014) outlines the situation with the English language in the USA, which reveals many parallels to the above-described situation with the Russian language (pp. 36-37). The author describes the growing popularity of feminist ideas in the USA, claiming that it has unavoidable consequences on the English language, spoken in the country. In genderless English, she observes a general move to “gendered references”, to the promotion of “gender-neutral ways of speaking of people, including the use of *they*, *he* or *she*, and alternating pronouns for generic antecedents” (McConnell-Ginet, 2014, p. 36). Therefore, gender is neutralised whenever possible. Considering languages with a well-defined gender category, McConnell-Ginet (2014) is convinced that feminisation can be seen as a global “natural” language strategy, which helps to increase “women’s visibility” (p. 36). As a result of these world-wide changes, the category of gender is becoming “a moving target” (McConnell-Ginet, 2014, p. 36). This means that gender is constantly changing under the influence of changeable societal ideologies and realities.

The above-given considerations point to the conclusion that there is a diachronic change in the Russian language. New social phenomena (such as equality of rights, feminist movement) lead to new linguistic phenomena (for example, formally masculine nouns refer to women (hybrids)) and to a greater flexibility of language (for example, greater optionality of agreement patterns, greater spectrum of use of semantic agreement, analytic features in Russian).

Female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* have not got such an attention in the discussion of diachronic changes in Russian as hybrids have. It can be explained by their straightforward meaning. These nouns refer exclusively to women and have upgrading, endearing denotation (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 11). Interestingly, feminists point to the unilateralism of the use of these nouns. Truly, female names having masculine form and sometimes masculine agreement are interpreted positively, as it is shown above. By contrast, male names and male terms ending in a vowel have a neuter interpretation. Moreover,

feminine form of nouns denoting males as well as feminine agreement patterns with these nouns are known to have a negative, downgrading connotation in particular contexts (for instance, *taka-ja p'janica* "such a drunker") (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 11). I do not support the idea of the unilateralism of masculine noun forms referring to females. As I explained in chapter 6, I do not consider that negative or any other connotation represents a part of semantic structure of formally feminine nouns referring to males. They are rather connected with the socio-cultural situation of a speaker. The positive, endearing connotation of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* is obviously connected with the suffix's meaning "small, tiny" and, in my opinion, has nothing to do with exaltation of men.

Independently from their connotation, suffixes *-ik/ -ok* remain masculine suffixes, which are used with nouns referring to females and therefore result in gender conflict situations. The results of my study with these nouns are unambiguous. Despite the possibility of using formal and mixed agreement patterns, monolingual Russian native speakers prefer semantic agreement patterns with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. This corresponds to the idea of Golev (2013) about the development of analytic features in the Russian language. Indeed, these are not morphological endings, but the surrounding words, which mirror the gender of female names in question. Unfortunately, because of the relatively little research, which has been done on female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, I am not able to compare agreement patterns used with these nouns in the past and in present times. Due to the similarity of form-meaning conflicts in females names ending in a consonant and in hybrids referring to females, I suppose that these nouns took the same route as hybrids, that is to say, they were used with formal agreement patterns in the past and are predominantly used with semantic agreement now. Although, I cannot assert this with confidence, because more research is necessary for this.

To summarise, the results of my study confirm the slow change of the Russian language system into a new direction of analytic languages, proposed in some Slavic studies. This change is closely connected with the growing importance of semantic agreement with sex-differentiable nouns. There are speculations that nouns in variable contexts will become similar to nouns in obligatory contexts, in which gender agreement is categorical and is semantically motivated (cf. Gorbatskaja, 2013). If this happens, it will lead to the reduction of agreement variability with these nouns. I consider this idea to be exaggerated. Although my study demonstrates the strong tendency to use semantic agreement with nouns in question, flexibility and variability of the language are still preserved. In my opinion, this variability can become less popular and more restricted with time, but it will not disappear.

7.6. The Discussion of the Results with Regard to Nouns in Variable Contexts in Heritage Russian.

After the detailed discussion of the results of monolingual Russian native speakers and the assessment of new developments in the Russian language, there arises the question of whether similar changes can be observed in heritage Russian. Considering advanced heritage speakers, it would be interesting to find out if these speakers treat nouns in variable contexts on a par with monolingual Russian speakers, as it is the case with nouns in obligatory contexts.

Before I give answers to these questions, let me briefly repeat the results of heritage speakers with nouns in variable contexts in table 16.

Table 16. The Use of Hybrids by Heritage Speakers.

	Mixed agreement	Semantic agreement	Syntactic agreement
advanced heritage speakers	34%	34%	30%
intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	15%	40%	45%

At first sight, these results are confusing. However, interesting conclusions can be made if a closer look is taken. First of all, the decreasing role of mixed agreement as compared to the monolingual native speakers can be observed. The difference is especially significant in the results of the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers. As a reminder, both the monolingual native speakers and the first generation immigrants used 58 percent of mixed agreement patterns with hybrids. By contrast, the advanced heritage speakers used only 34 percent of mixed agreement patterns, whereas the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used mere 15 percent. In this way, our prediction from chapter 5, which highlights the dependency of the use of mixed agreement on the proficiency of the speakers is confirmed.

Next, I observe a more frequent use of syntactic agreement patterns by heritage speakers. The monolingual native speakers of Russian and the first generation immigrants

used this agreement in 15 and 17 percent of cases, respectively. The advanced heritage speakers used a good deal more syntactic agreement patterns – 30 percent, whereas the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used 45 percent of formal agreement patterns. This fact confirms the prediction that the use of syntactic agreement with nouns in variable contexts is higher by less experienced speakers and therefore it depends on speakers' language proficiency. As stated in chapter 6, this assertion is also true for nouns in obligatory contexts. Thus, I can conclude that in gender conflict situations (in both obligatory and variable contexts) less proficient speakers tend to use formal agreement patterns and vice versa. To put it another way, the use of agreement patterns in the situations of form-meaning conflicts strongly depends on the proficiency level of speakers.

Another interesting observation, based on the data of heritage speakers is a relatively high percentage of the use of semantic agreement patterns (advanced heritage speakers – 34 percent, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers – 40 percent) as compared to the two control groups of speakers (monolingual native speakers – 24 percent, the first generation immigrants – 25 percent). However, this difference is not as striking as the difference in the use of syntactic agreement patterns. Moreover, it can be explained as the compensation of the avoidance of mixed agreement by heritage speakers. By the way, this observation goes hand in hand with the idea of the growing importance of semantic agreement in contemporary standard Russian.

Interestingly, except for a somewhat more frequent use of semantic agreement with hybrids, there are no hints on any analytic features in heritage Russian, if the results of my study are considered. Many linguistic works on heritage languages point out the predominance of analytic language means in heritage languages, which is not the case in my study (cf. Laleko, 2010, p. 14; Polinsky, 2011b, p. 323; Montrul & Polinsky, 2013, p. 141; Mikhaylova, 2018, p. 270). I explain this phenomenon by means of the high proficiency of my participants. Moreover, the great majority of heritage speakers, who use analytic structures in Russian, are Russian-English bilinguals. English, in contrast to German, is an analytic language. German has more analytic features than Russian, but it belongs to the group of synthetic languages. That is why, it is comprehensible why Russian-German bilinguals do not use as many analytic structures in Russian as Russian-English speakers do.

Table 17 below briefly presents the results of heritage speakers with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

Table 17. The Use of Female Names Ending in *-ik/ -ok* by Heritage Speakers.

	Mixed agreement	Semantic agreement	Syntactic agreement
advanced heritage speakers	30%	48%	22%
intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	15%	45%	32%

The results of my investigation as to the use of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* represent some interesting facts. First and foremost, the dependency of the use of syntactic agreement patterns on the proficiency of speakers is observed again. Indeed, both control groups of speakers used almost no formal agreement with nouns in question (monolingual native speakers – 4 percent, first generation immigrants – 1 percent). On the contrary, the advanced heritage speakers used syntactic agreement patterns in 22 percent of cases and the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers – in 32 percent of cases, which is significantly higher than in the case of control groups. Thus, the prediction about the dependency of the use of formal agreement on the proficiency of speakers is borne out for all exceptional noun classes, investigated in this thesis. Less proficient speakers use more formal agreement patterns. As I explained in chapter 6, the most important reasons for this phenomenon are the following. Firstly, it is the fact that formal agreement is “more economical in processing terms” because of its grammar-internal status (Laleko, 2018, p. 248). Secondly, the reliance on formal agreement is irrespective of the socio-cultural experience of speakers and therefore is simpler and clearer for speakers (cf. Rodina, 2008, p. 172; Laleko, 2019, p. 154).

Furthermore, the above-presented results confirm the idea that the use of mixed agreement depends on the proficiency of speakers. There is an obvious difference in the use of mixed agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* by the advanced heritage speakers (30 percent) and by the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers (15 percent). So, the prediction as to the dependency of the use of mixed agreement on the speakers’ proficiency level seems to be borne out.

However, opposite to hybrids, the monolingual native speakers and the first generation speakers used less mixed agreement patterns with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (monolingual native speakers – 11 percent, first generation immigrants – 16 percent) than

with hybrids (monolingual native speakers – 58 percent, first generation immigrants – 58 percent). Moreover, the two control groups of participants treated the two noun classes under consideration – hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* - differently. They preferred mixed agreement patterns with the former class of nouns and semantic agreement - with the latter one.

Curiously, heritage speakers treated the two noun classes alike. This is especially obvious on the example of mixed agreement. The advanced heritage speakers preferred mixed agreement patterns with hybrids in 34 percent of cases and with female names ending in a consonant in 30 percent of cases. Similarly, the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers preferred mixed agreement with both noun classes in 15 percent of cases. The remaining agreement patterns were more or less equally distributed between syntactic and semantic agreement. Although it should be admitted that semantic agreement was used a bit more often with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (advanced heritage speakers – 48 percent, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers – 45 percent) than with hybrids (advanced heritage speakers – 34 percent, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers – 40 percent).

Let me pay some more attention to the semantic agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. At first sight, it is noticeable that heritage speakers predominantly used semantic agreement with these nouns, as it was the case with the control groups. This fact can be easily explained in the same way as the use of semantic agreement with male names ending in a vowel, namely, by means of the simpler semantic structure of proper names. To recap, Rodina (2008) points out the three main characteristics, which describe the semantic structure of a proper name: it picks out a specific individual, it has just one referent and it lacks an internal semantic structure, that is it does not describe the individual it depicts (pp. 107-108). Definitely, female names in question are semantically simpler than hybrids and this can explain the preference of semantic agreement patterns with them. Indeed, hybrids describe their referents in a particular way. Moreover, the generic component of hybrids makes their structure more challenging. However, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* also differ a bit from male names ending in a vowel. Their semantic structure is more complicated, because of the additional connotation carried by the suffixes *-ik/ -ok*.

7.7. Difference between the Results of Heritage Speakers and Control Groups.

Despite the seemingly identical results with respect to the predominance of semantic agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, there is an important significant difference in

the percentage of semantic agreement patterns used by heritage speakers and by control groups. The monolingual native speakers and the first generation speakers used feminine (semantic) agreement in the large majority of cases with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (81 and 83 percent respectively).

The situation is different with the results of heritage speakers. Although semantic agreement patterns dominate in their results, they are used in less than half of cases (advanced heritage speakers – 48 percent, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers – 45 percent). Moreover, another puzzling difference in the results of heritage speakers and control groups deals with mixed agreement patterns. Despite a seeming difficulty of mixed agreement, heritage speakers used more mixed agreement patterns with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (advanced heritage speakers – 30 percent, intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers - 15 percent) than the controls (monolingual native speakers – 14 percent, first generation immigrants – 11 percent).

From this data, I conclude that there is an important divergence in the results of heritage speakers and control groups with respect to female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. As previously mentioned, the two control groups treat hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* differently. Hybrids are predominantly used with mixed agreement (58 percent), whereas female names in question are predominantly used with feminine (semantic) agreement (over 80 percent). Conversely, no such difference can be observed in the results of heritage speakers. They seem to treat the two noun classes alike.

In my opinion, the fact that heritage speakers treat female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrids referring to females in the same way shows that their choice of agreement patterns with the nouns in question is conditioned by the same factors. This observation is very important for the establishment of differences between heritage speakers and control groups. As previously mentioned, the two control groups of speakers are sensitive to the two meaning components of hybrids, referential meaning and generic meaning, and therefore they prefer mixed agreement with these nouns. Formal criterion does not seem to have an important influence on the choice of mixed agreement patterns with hybrids. However, both formal and semantic agreements are important for the use of mixed agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. Remarkably, heritage speakers used equally high percentage of mixed agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and with hybrids referring to females. Hence, they should follow same agreement principles with both noun classes. In particular, I believe that heritage speakers follow formal (masculine) and semantic (feminine) agreement criteria for the use of mixed agreement patterns with both hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

I am convinced that the reason for this behaviour is the loss of genericness in heritage Russian. As genericness does not play any role for mixed agreement in the case of heritage speakers, they have one and the same strategy for the use of agreement patterns with hybrids and with female names in question. Particularly, the masculine form of the nouns results in masculine adjectival agreement and the semantics (referential meaning in case of hybrids and inherent lexical meaning in case of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*) results in feminine verbal agreement. This strategy explains why heritage speakers use similar agreement patterns with the two noun classes. It also explains why heritage speakers' language behaviour with regard to agreement with nouns in variable contexts differs from that of the two control groups.

From my point of view, different use of mixed agreement as a result of the missing generic component in the hybrids' semantic structure in heritage Russian represents a vivid example of the covert restructuring of heritage Russian (cf. Laleko, 2010). In chapter 5, I noticed that covert restructuring in heritage languages takes place if heritage speakers use language phenomena differently than monolingual native speakers, though grammatically correctly. Because of the greater optionality in gender agreement with nouns in variable contexts (all three agreement patterns – masculine, feminine and mixed – are grammatically correct), heritage speakers use nouns in variable contexts grammatically impeccably. Yet still, their language behaviour differs from that of monolingual speakers.

Tables 18 and 19 visualise the ideas presented above.

Table 18. Preferred Gender Agreement Patterns with Hybrids Referring to Females.

Type of speakers	Preferred agreement pattern/patterns	Reasons for the choice of agreement patterns
Control groups: Monolingual native speakers First generation speakers	Mixed agreement (58%)	Semantic agreement criterion is the most important: - generic meaning component results in masculine adjectival agreement - referential meaning component results in

		feminine verbal agreement - formal agreement plays a secondary role for the choice of agreement patterns
Heritage speakers:		Semantic criterion (referential) results in feminine verbal agreement. Formal criterion results in masculine agreement.
Advanced heritage speakers	Mixed agreement (34%) and semantic agreement (34%)	
Intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	Mixed agreement (15%), semantic agreement (40%), syntactic agreement (45%)	

Table 19. Preferred Gender Agreement Patterns with Female Names Ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

Type of speakers	Preferred agreement pattern/patterns	Reasons for the choice of agreement patterns
Control groups:		Semantic criterion (inherent lexical meaning)
Monolingual native speakers	Semantic agreement (81%)	
First generation speakers	Semantic agreement (83%)	
Heritage speakers:		Semantic criterion (lexical) results in feminine verbal agreement. Formal criterion results in masculine agreement.
Advanced heritage speakers	Mixed agreement (30%) and semantic agreement (48%)	
Intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	Mixed agreement (15%), semantic agreement (45%), syntactic agreement (32%)	

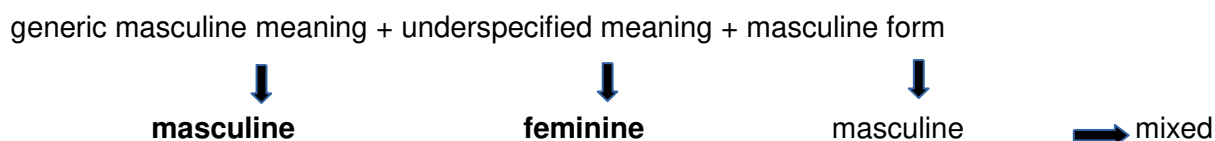
So, it is clear now that control speakers have different reasons for the use of agreement patterns with nouns in variable contexts. By contrast, heritage speakers treat all nouns in variable contexts similarly. Moreover, it is obvious that the controls prefer semantic agreement patterns with nouns in question, contributing to the development of analytic features in Russian. Conversely, heritage speakers tend to rely on formal gender agreement. This reliance, in its turn, hinders the above-described diachronic language change in heritage Russian.

Most importantly, it has been shown that heritage speakers preserve mixed agreement patterns, despite their difficulty. However, the percentage of the use of mixed agreement patterns depends on the speakers' language proficiency.

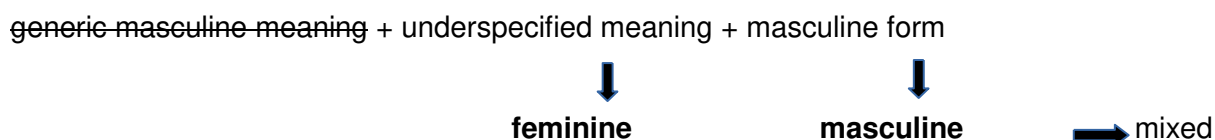
As a conclusion, let me display different reasonings of bilingual and monolingual Russian speakers for the choice of mixed agreement in Scheme 14.

Scheme 14. Mechanisms of Emergence of Mixed Agreement.

14.1. Control speakers (hybrids referring to females):



14.2. Heritage speakers (hybrids referring to females = female names ending in *-ik/-ok*):



To sum it all up, let me briefly outline the main points of my research regarding nouns in variable contexts:

1. Semantic criterion plays the most important role for the choice of gender agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns by proficient speakers. It refers to both nouns in obligatory contexts and nouns in variable contexts.

2. Monolingual native speakers are sensitive to the hybrids' semantic structure: female referent, on the one hand, and genericness, on the other hand, result in mixed agreement patterns.

3. Monolingual native speakers treat female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and hybrids referring to women differently. They resolve different types of conflict with these nouns.

4. Heritage speakers are not sensitive to genericness, which results in the identical use of hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*.

5. There is a tendency to develop analytic language features in contemporary standard Russian, namely the dominance of semantic agreement in gender conflict situations. This tendency is absent in heritage Russian.

6. Less proficient speakers use more formal agreement patterns.

7. Less proficient speakers use less mixed agreement patterns.

7.8. The Comparison of my Results with the Study of Laleko (2018, 2019).

Laleko (2018, 2019) did no research on female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, but she conducted a very interesting study on the use of hybrids by Russian heritage speakers.

In Laleko's (2019) study, Russian native speakers clearly preferred masculine agreement with hybrids across all experimental conditions (p. 170). Laleko (2019) explains these results with the fact that generic nouns are typically used with masculine agreement in formal style (p. 170). However, the results of my experiment are different. Although, as I will show below, my results do not really contradict Laleko's (2019) outcomes.

Let me pay attention to the differences in our studies in detail. Unlike Laleko's (2018, 2019) participants, heritage speakers who participated in my study predominantly used semantic and mixed agreement patterns with hybrids referring to females. In my opinion, the different results of the two studies resulted from different ways of proceeding. In contrast to my investigation, Laleko (2018, 2019) tested only one agreement component at a time, which disables the analyses of agreement patterns and therefore of mixed agreement. Furthermore, in Laleko's (2018, 2019) tests, hybrids have no referents, whereas in my experiment, the presence of a referent is necessary. In the absence of a strongly expressed form-meaning conflict, Laleko's (2018, 2019) participants prefer to rely on the form of hybrids.

Apart from this, Laleko's (2018, 2019) differentiation between paired and unpaired hybrids is of interest. Paired hybrids are such hybrid nouns, which have feminine counterparts. It means that they can refer to females either in a masculine form or in a

derived feminine form. For example, *učitel'* "teacher" can denote both a male teacher and a female teacher. However, this noun can have a female ending *-n-ic-a* in order to refer to a female only: *učitel'-n-ic-a* "a female teacher". Unpaired hybrids have only one grammatically masculine form. No equivalent feminine counterparts are available. For example, the noun *voditel'* "driver" denotes both a male and a female driver. Any derived feminine morphological forms of this noun are ungrammatical: **voditel'-n-ic-a* (Laleko, 2018, p. 246). I will return to the topic of paired and unpaired hybrids in subchapter 7.11.

According to Laleko (2018), heritage speakers used masculine agreement with paired hybrids. Laleko (2018) explains this by the fact that her participants use feminine agreement with derived feminine nouns if this noun form is available. Heritage speakers exclude the possibility of using paired hybrids in masculine form to refer to females. Laleko's (2018) observation corresponds to the idea of the loss of genericness of hybrids by heritage speakers presented above in this chapter.

Similarly, Laleko's (2018) participants used unpaired hybrids with masculine agreement patterns. As unpaired hybrids have no derived feminine form, heritage speakers reanalyse them as specifically masculine. They do not use morphologically masculine hybrids referring to females. This fact demonstrates once again that heritage speakers are not sensitive to genericness of hybrids.

So, despite different methodology, Laleko (2018) also observes that hybrids are not used generically by heritage speakers. She calls this phenomenon lexicalisation of hybrids, which means that hybrid nouns lose genericness and are used as specifically masculine in heritage Russian. Moreover, Laleko (2018) notices that in the acceptability judgement test, heritage speakers treated hybrids on a par with lexically masculine nouns (such as *brat* "brother" - *sestra* "sister"). Laleko's (2018) control group, however, showed a significant difference between these two noun classes, accepting much more feminine agreement with hybrids than lexically masculine nouns in both adjectival and verbal mismatched agreement contexts (p. 255).

The fact that heritage speakers treat hybrids and lexically masculine nouns in a similar way, namely the so-called lexicalisation or masculinisation of hybrids, makes Laleko (2018) think that heritage speakers restructure the privative oppositions of paired hybrids, consisting of marked and unmarked members, into the equipollent oppositions, which semantically and morphologically equal each other. I will discuss this problem in more detail in subchapter 7.11.

One of the main explanations of the masculinisation of hybrids according to Laleko (2018) deals with the processing economy, "which favor the more transparent one-to-one

mappings between forms and features over the more ambiguous one-to-many mappings associated with multi-valued forms” (p. 256).

As a result of her investigation, Laleko (2018) points out two main restructuring processes in heritage Russian: lexicalisation of hybrids and reduction in agreement variability of hybrids (dominance of masculine agreement). Comparing these conclusions to my study, I partially support the idea of lexicalisation of hybrids. I argue that hybrids are not used generically in heritage Russian. However, I consider that they preserve their underspecified meaning component, which allows hybrids to denote females. So, the results of my participants show that hybrids can denote females in heritage Russian.

More than that, I do not observe any reduction of agreement variability in heritage Russian. Indeed, my participants are able to use all three possible agreement patterns with the nouns in question (masculine, feminine, mixed). By contrast, Laleko’s (2018) participants showed different language behaviour and treated hybrids as specifically masculine.

7.9. The comparison of my study with the study of Rodina (2008).

As previously mentioned, Rodina (2008) investigates the peculiarities of gender acquisition, in particular of gender assignment and gender agreement on the example of Russian children. Rodina’s research deals with common gender nouns, male names ending in a vowel, hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. I will concentrate on her results as to hybrids referring to females and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* in this chapter.

Interestingly, similar to Laleko’s (2018) study, Rodina’s (2008) young participants (2-to-4-year-old children) strongly preferred morphological gender agreement with both classes of nouns under consideration. Masculine agreement was used with 81.2 percent and with 85.7 percent of the total number of utterances produced for hybrids referring to females and for female names ending in a consonant, respectively (Rodina, 2008, p. 127). However, Rodina (2008) shows that older children (5 to 6,5 years old) use more semantic agreement patterns (p. 163). So, age plays a crucial role for the acquisition of the semantic rule in gender assignment.

Rodina (2008) considers that the acquisition of gender with exceptional nouns is delayed because of the failing social experience at a young age. Social experience is crucial for the acquisition of nouns in variable contexts. Unsurprisingly, the results of Rodina’s adult participants differ greatly from the results of children. The caregivers of the participating children clearly preferred semantic agreement with the nouns in question. 78.5 percent of all hybrids referring to females and 97.8 percent of all female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* were

used with semantic agreement patterns by the caregivers (Rodina, 2008, p. 127). The exact age, when children start to use nouns in variable contexts adult-like, remains the question for future research. In her study, Rodina (2008) comes to the conclusion that semantic agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* dominates already at the age of 6 or 7. However, she does not give any further information about hybrids (p. 135).

All in all, Rodina's (2008) results are in accordance with her expectations that formal gender criterion is acquired earlier than semantic gender criterion (p. 3). This assumption, for its part, confirms that grammar-internal factors in gender acquisition are easier to acquire than grammar-external constraints (for example, social factors). Similar results have been shown by my participants. As stated above, my study also supports the dependency of the use of semantic agreement on the speakers' language experience and proficiency.

By the way, as previously mentioned, Rodina (2008) classifies the four classes of exceptional nouns into nouns in obligatory contexts and nouns in variable contexts, based on their dependency on social factors and on the role of semantic agreement (p. 127). As is known, I adopted this classification for my research. Both the study of Rodina (2008) and my study show that nouns in obligatory contexts are easier to acquire than nouns in variable contexts. Moreover, both studies prove that nouns in obligatory contexts are predominantly used with semantic agreement patterns. With respect to nouns in variable contexts, the dominance of semantic agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* is evident. Rodina (2008) asserts that, in her study, this dominance occurs in the language of children, who are older than six years, and in the language of their adult care-givers (p. 163, p. 172). The monolingual Russian native speakers, who participated in my study, demonstrate similar outcomes. So, I can conclude that monolingual native speakers, who are older than six years, are proved to use semantic agreement patterns not only with nouns in obligatory contexts, but also with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. However, hybrids are supposed to be acquired later and to represent more challenges for both monolingual children and heritage speakers. Rodina (2008) explains this, considering the role of the consistency of input in gender acquisition (pp. 133-134, p. 172). Truly, gender agreement with nouns in obligatory contexts and with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* is consistent, whereas hybrids are used with different agreement patterns. The results of my control group clearly demonstrate this.

On the whole, my results do not contradict the results of Rodina (2008). Although the children preferred masculine agreement patterns with nouns in variable contexts, Rodina (2008) persuasively explains this with the development of gender assignment and gender agreement processes on the socio-cultural experience of speakers. With growing experience, semantic agreement overrides morphological agreement. Therefore, the

difference between the results of my study and of Rodina's (2008) study depends on the age of the speakers.

Now, I would like to pay the reader's attention to Rodina's (2008) interesting contradiction to Corbett's (1988) semantic rule in gender assignment. Rodina (2008) argues that the semantic rule is not always sufficient for gender assignment and gender agreement processes. The scholar persuasively shows that formal criterion plays a more important role at an early stage of language acquisition. Conversely, the results of my study support Corbett's (1988) idea. Semantic rule plays a crucial role in gender conflict situations. Similarly, the control group in Laleko's (2018) study and the adult participants of Rodina's (2008) experiment also demonstrate the importance of the semantic rule. In line with these facts, I argue that Corbett's (1988) semantic principle plays an important role in gender assignment and gender agreement processes. However, this rule becomes effective only in the language of proficient speakers. This explains why children and less proficient heritage speakers follow formal agreement criterion.

The following conclusions can be made on the basis of the above-presented comparison of my study with the studies of Laleko (2018, 2019) and of Rodina (2008):

Firstly, I showed that less experienced speakers tend to follow formal gender criterion in gender conflict situations.

Secondly, the semantic gender rule is shown to play an important role in gender conflict situations for proficient speakers (such as advanced heritage speakers, adult monolingual native speakers).

Thirdly, hybrids proved to represent the biggest challenge in both bilingual and monolingual language acquisition, because of their complicated semantic structure and less consistent input.

Finally, heritage speakers show the loss of genericness of hybrids not only in my investigation, but also in the study of Laleko (2018). However, unlike Laleko (2018), I observe no decrease in the variability of agreement patterns used by heritage speakers. I only observe the decrease of the use of mixed agreement patterns.

7.10. The Reasons for the Loss of Genericness with Hybrids.

Having considered hybrids in heritage Russian from different perspectives, the idea of the loss of genericness of hybrids has been proven. This loss leads to the covert restructuring of heritage Russian. In this chapter I would like to explain some reasons for this puzzling phenomenon.

I argue that the main reason for the differences in heritage Russian is due to incomplete language acquisition. Indeed, while testing children, Rodina (2008) notices that nouns in variable contexts are acquired later than nouns in obligatory contexts. Moreover, hybrids are acquired later than female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. According to Rodina (2008), hybrids represent the only noun class under consideration, which is not fully acquired at the pre-school age. As heritage speakers are known to have their first problems with their home language after the start of school, I suppose that they have had no or little chance to acquire hybrids appropriately. Rodina (2008) shows that the acquisition of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* finishes at the age of 6-7. In my opinion, heritage speakers acquire the whole variability of agreement patterns with these nouns at pre-school age and then transfer this knowledge to hybrids. In this way, they follow formal and semantic gender criteria in rather equal shares for both hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, ignoring the genericness of hybrids.

However, I should admit, that my participants actively used Russian in their every-day life even after they have started to go to school. Moreover, their communication in Russian was not restricted by their family, but was spread over a big Russian community (for example, they visited Russian camps and Russian language courses, they organised different Russian events and so on). Thus, they had got enough input in Russian during their school years. Yet still, genericness is a very complicated concept, which is seldom used in every-day conversations and needs sufficient language experience in order to be acquired. I consider that the difficulty of genericness and the rareness of this phenomena in the everyday speech make the acquisition of hybrids very complicated.

Interestingly, German also has generic nouns (cf. Neščeretova, 2006, pp. 105-129). Many German masculine nouns denote not only a male person, but also a person in general. For example, such a masculine noun as *Arzt* “doctor” denotes a male doctor, but it can also be used to refer to a woman in a general context (for example, *Nina möchte Arzt werden* “Nina wants to be a doctor-M”). Nevertheless, such cases are rare in German. The simple and productive German suffix *-in* is used to produce feminine forms with most German

masculine nouns. As a rule, the masculine form is not used with reference to a female in modern German, although there are exceptions.

It is worth mentioning, however, that generic masculine nouns take masculine agreement patterns in German. That is why German speakers have a simpler task than Russian speakers with these nouns. They follow formal gender criterion and are not confused by the variability of agreement patterns. The results of my study show that advanced heritage speakers preserve the variability of agreement with hybrids, although they use different criteria for the choice of agreement patterns than monolingual Russian speakers do. So, I consider that the presence of generic masculine nouns in the German language does not influence their acquisition of hybrids in Russian much. It is the Russian input, which plays the most important role for advanced speakers.

Although the language transfer from German could explain the fact that the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used many formal agreement patterns, I consider that the simplicity of formal agreement as compared to semantic agreement as well as the dependency of formal agreement on social factors seems to be a more plausible explanation for this use.

So, language transfer fails to explain the differences in the use of gender in heritage Russian. By contrast, as shown above, incomplete acquisition is able to explain these phenomena.

Thus, I believe that heritage speakers use different criteria for the choice of agreement patterns with hybrids, because their acquisition of hybrids remain incomplete. In particular, they fail to acquire the generic meaning component of hybrids, which is known to be acquired rather late, namely at school age. The interruption of home language acquisition after school begins as well as the limited language input result in the incomplete acquisition of the hybrids' semantic structure and grammatical functions. As hybrids are characterised by the greater variety of possible agreement patterns, heritage speakers have no problems in the grammatically correct use of hybrids, although they use them differently than monolingual native speakers. I argue that heritage speakers apply gender agreement rules used with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* to hybrids. This leads to the reduction of the use of mixed agreement with hybrids in heritage Russian and to the covert restructuring of heritage Russian.

Language restructuring has been observed by numerous linguists, who investigate heritage languages. For example, Laleko (2010) describes the process of covert restructuring of the imperfective aspect of Russian verbs by advanced heritage speakers. Likewise, Polinsky (2008) considers the process of language restructuring to be the main

reason for the loss of neuter gender in heritage Russian. Comparing the results of her participants, low-level heritage Russian speakers, and the results of monolingual Russian children, she concludes “that heritage speakers reanalyze the system based on their limited input, and the results of this reanalysis are not the same as in emergent systems of L1 learners” (Polinsky, 2008, p. 29). Thus, language restructuring plays an important role in gender acquisition in heritage Russian.

7.11. Avoidance of Hybrids.

7.11.1. Paired and Unpaired Hybrids.

Laleko (2018, 2019) argues that there is one more important point with regard to hybrids, which should be of concern, namely the differentiation between paired and unpaired hybrids. Indeed, some of the results in my study can also be interpreted in connection with this differentiation.

As is known, hybrid nouns are nouns, which have a masculine form, but can either refer to both a male and a female or can be used generically. Some hybrid nouns can form derived feminine noun equivalents. These hybrid nouns are called paired hybrids. For example, *učitel'* “teacher” - *učitel'-n-ic-a* “a female teacher”, *prodavec* “seller” - *prodav-šč-ic-a* “female seller”. So, in the case of paired hybrids, both masculine and derived feminine forms of hybrids can refer to females. However, there are hybrids that have only one grammatical form, which is masculine. It refers to both males and females. For example, *voditel'* “(female/male) driver”, *vrač* “(female/male) doctor”. Curiously, Russian native speakers sometimes use unpaired hybrids with feminising suffixes, in order to highlight the gender of a referent. However, such use of unpaired hybrids is ungrammatical and is common only to colloquial speech. For example, **vrač-ich-a* “female doctor”, **šehf-in-ja* “female boss”, **doktor-š-a* “female doctor”.

Laleko (2018) correctly notices that paired hybrids differ from unpaired hybrids in that they build different lexical oppositions (p. 255). Paired hybrids represent the unmarked members of privative oppositions, whereas the derived feminine forms of hybrids represent the marked members of these oppositions and have a more restricted use. Conversely, unpaired hybrids are underspecified for gender.

7.11.2. Feminising Suffixes and Language Change.

As mentioned in chapter 2, hybrids represent a good example of diachronic changes in the Russian language. I showed that the use of hybrids had undergone great changes. There were times when they referred only to men. Later on, they referred to both men and women, but were used exclusively in a masculine form and with masculine agreement. Finally, semantic agreement has become a norm for hybrids referring to females.

Thus, the change of the attitude to language norms can be observed in contemporary standard Russian. Instead of formality of language phenomena, the pragmatic role of a language, its informative and connotative functions become most important (cf. Laskova, 1999; Laskova, 2001). Moreover, even the ungrammatical use of language structures is tolerated in contemporary standard Russian, if this use serves the better understanding of a speaker's message. So, noun's denotation, its communication goal and the given pragmatic situation are usually connected in an utterance of the Russian speakers of today. Laskova (1999) notices that even such a seemingly rude word form as **doktor-š-a* "female doctor" can sound good if it is used in an appropriate context. Although this word form is grammatically incorrect, it can be pragmatically more advantageous.

Thus, the diachronic change with regard to hybrids can in some cases lead to breaking the grammar rules. For instance, it is the case if feminine noun forms are derived from unpaired hybrids. Pragmatic language functions overcome formalities.

The Russian language is rich in derivation suffixes and that is why it represents a fertile field for deriving and creating new words. Truly, Russian has more than twenty suffixes, which form derived feminine forms from hybrids. These are *-in(ja)* (*šef-in-ja* "female boss"), *-y(nja)* (*bar-yn-ja* "mistress"), *-is(a)* (*direktr-is-a* "female director"), *-ess(a)* (*baron-ess-a* "Baroness"), *-ich(a)* (*vrač-ich-a* "female doctor"), *-ic(a)* (*pev-ic-a* "female singer"), *-k(a)* (*student-k-a* "female student"), *-ovk(a)* (*vor-ovk-a*, "female thief"), *-ank(a)* (*greč-ank-a* "Greek woman"), *-enk(a)* (*nišč-enk-a* "beggar woman"), *-š(a)* (*direktor-ša*, "female director") and others (Neščeretova, 2006, pp. 73-97).

Curiously, German has only one equivalent to all these Russian suffixes, namely the suffix *-in*. For example, *ein Chef* "boss" - *eine Chef-in* "female boss", *ein Arzt* "doctor" - *eine Ärzt-in* "female doctor". However, this suffix is very productive (Neščeretova, 2006, pp. 73-97).

From the feminists' point of view, the new ways of creating feminine nouns are far from being satisfactory. Doleschal and Schmid (2001) point out numerous reasons for their discontent (pp. 5-7). Firstly, in spite of a large majority of feminising suffixes, there are far more masculine suffixes in Russian. Moreover, female suffixes are in most cases added to masculine stems, but not vice versa. Other word formation devices (compounds, clippings, zero derivation) work in a similar way. Besides, there are numerous masculine nouns, which either cannot be feminised at all (for example, *politik* "politician") or take on a negative connotation after a feminising suffix is added (*direktor-š-a* "director"). Last but not least, Doleschal and Schmid (2001) stress the fact that female forms of personal nouns, denoting prestigious occupations, are usually avoided in the Russian language (p. 7). Although, similar tendencies can be observed in other languages too: "There is an unsolved contradiction between femininity and high social prestige" (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 7).

At the same time, Doleschal and Schmid (2001) show that contemporary standard Russian is slowly changing and the role of forming the feminine gender is becoming more and more important. As an example, such words as *lingvist-k-a* "female linguist", *aspirant-k-a* "female graduate student" had a negative connotation in the first half of the twentieth century. However, it is not the case nowadays. The two words are absolutely neutral (Doleschal and Schmid, 2001, pp. 8-9).

Except for suffixation, compounding can be considered to be another way of deriving feminine forms from hybrids. Although, most frequently, apposition words are used with this goal. If such words as *žeščina* "woman", *devočka* "girl" and the like are combined with hybrids, then their reference can be undoubtedly determined as female. For example, *žeščina-ehkskursovod* "female tour guide" or *devočka-kapitan* "girl captain" (cf. Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 7). By the way, as Doleschal and Schmid (2001) correctly notice, "[t]hese juxtapositions are not lexicalized, and their use is confined to contexts where the female sex has to be stressed, similar to the use of the adjective "female"" (p. 7).

Doleschal and Schmid (2001) conducted some very interesting tests on hybrids and common gender nouns, which can be helpful for the interpretation of the results of my study (pp. 11-15). I will concentrate on their tests on hybrids in this chapter. The authors used hybrids both with and without referents in their investigation. They were interested in the interpretation of these nouns by Russian native speakers. The scholars found out that hybrid nouns are predominantly perceived as having the masculine gender (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 14). Even for those hybrid nouns, which denote professions typical for women, like, for example, *učitel'* "teacher", masculine references dominate.

There are some exceptions, however. For example, such words as *vrač* “doctor” or *buchgalter* “accountant” are perceived as feminine by most speakers in question. Therefore, Doleschal and Schmid (2001) conclude that the dominance of masculine gender “may be overruled by extralinguistic factors” (p. 12). This is the case with nouns used both with and without a context. Corbett (1988) reached a similar conclusion when he considered the more preferable agreement patterns with hybrids (p. 8).

In rare cases, female participants of the feminist linguists’ study showed different results from the male participants. For instance, such nouns as *jurist* “lawyer”, *geograf* “geographer”, *reporter* “reporter”, *student* “student”, *sud’ja* “judge” were perceived as masculine by women and as feminine by men (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 14). Moreover, in another task, the female participants evaluated the possibility of the given hybrids to refer to females as “very common” more often than the male participants did (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 14). However, for the most part, hybrid nouns were perceived as masculine in all test conditions and by all participants.

No less interesting is the next result of Doleschal and Schmid (2001). In particular, the test’s participants were asked to find feminine equivalents to the given hybrid nouns. Curiously, the majority of participants, namely 61 percent, preferred not to change the form of the hybrids. In other words, they chose the masculine form of the hybrids to refer to females. This fact displays “an interesting paradox”: “although respondents interpret epicene nouns as predominantly “male”, epicene nouns are the most common form to denote women” (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 14). This results in an interesting discrepancy between intention and effect (Doleschal & Schmid, 2001, p. 14). Thus, Doleschal and Schmid (2001) prove that there is a difference in the perception of hybrid nouns from the speaker’s perspective and from the hearer’s perspective. For speakers, hybrid nouns can be easily used with respect to women. However, for hearers, derived female forms of hybrids referring to females are more convenient.

Definitely, the hearer’s greater convenience leads to the diachronic change in the language. I believe that the hearer’s perspective has been ignored in the Russian language for years. That is why formal language criteria in the use of hybrid nouns has dominated in the language. Even now, Russian native speakers use masculine forms of hybrid nouns referring to females without any problems. The results of my study also confirm this. To recall, I used hybrids, which have generic masculine forms but refer to females, in my test. My participants had no problems with the form-meaning mismatch, which these nouns represent.

With time, native speakers begin to avoid the contradiction of noun's form and meaning. The "discrepancy between intention and effect", described by Doleschal and Schmid (2001), becomes more and more obvious to them (p. 14). I think that this is one of the reasons why formal rules have been continually changing into pragmatic rules. In chapter 7.4, I showed that semantic agreement patterns have overridden formal agreement patterns. In this way, the discrepancy, mentioned above, is partially eliminated.

The next step in the language change in question concerns the change of the form of hybrids. As shown above, Russian native speakers can use ungrammatical derived feminine forms of hybrids for pragmatic reasons. By the way, this tendency is growing.

Paying attention to the fact that semantic agreement patterns were ungrammatical in the first half of the twentieth century, it is easy to suppose that the ungrammatical use of derived feminine noun forms will also become grammatical some day. One can also suppose that these forms would be used in official sources, and not only in colloquial speech, some day.

So, the diachronic change with regard to hybrids was proven again. Now, let me discuss the results of my study with regard to the change of hybrids' form. In the largest part of my test, the form of hybrids was predetermined. It was done on purpose, in order to create a form-meaning mismatch (masculine form, feminine reference). So, the participants had no choice and had to deal with hybrids in masculine form referring to females. The main question of these tasks was to define the dominant agreement pattern for the given nouns and to determine the frequency of use of mixed agreement patterns by four different types of speakers.

However, in the first part of the test, namely in the translation from German into Russian, participants were given several sentences, for which they could choose deliberate words. Certainly, I was expected that my participants would use hybrids in the given sentences. However, it just so happened that different speakers used different translation strategies in this task.

Tables 20 and 21 briefly present my results.

Table 20. Noun Forms of Paired Hybrids Referring to Females (Task 1).

	Masculine from of a hybrid	Feminine form of a hybrid
Monolingual native speakers	93%	7%
First generation immigrants	87%	13%
Advanced heritage speakers	0%	100%
Intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	0%	100%

Table 21. Noun Forms of Unpaired Hybrids Referring to Females (Task 1).

	Masculine from of a hybrid	Feminine form of a hybrid
Monolingual native speakers	93%	7%
First generation immigrants	87%	13%
Advanced heritage speakers	75%	25%
Intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers	50%	50%

The results of my test show that it will presumably take a long time for ungrammatical derived feminine forms to become wide-spread and – even longer than that – grammatical. Monolingual Russian native speakers preferred not to change the hybrids' form in the first task, although they could do this. They changed their form only in 7 percent of cases with both paired and unpaired hybrids referring to females. Thus, with more than 90 percent of hybrids referring to females, masculine form was used. Besides, it should be mentioned that monolingual native speakers used both paired and unpaired hybrids similarly.

In the same way, the first generation immigrants treated the two hybrid types alike and used only a little part of them in a feminine form, namely 13 percent.

It should be noted, however, that the task given to the two control groups of participants differs from the translation task given to the heritage speakers. See chapter 5 for details. This fact reduces the value of the results of these speakers, but does not reject its importance. Obviously, more research with monolingual Russian speakers is needed. For now, it is

important that monolingual speakers showed no tendency of avoiding of hybrids referring to females, even if they could do it.

In any case, the results of heritage speakers are much more variable. The more proficient heritage speakers, that is to say the advanced heritage speakers, changed the form of 25 percent of unpaired hybrids from masculine into feminine, although these forms are ungrammatical. The less proficient heritage speakers, to whom I refer as the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers, used 50 percent of unpaired hybrids ungrammatically, creating a feminine form out of them. This shows that heritage speakers demonstrate the tendency to avoid hybrids referring to females and in this way they also avoid the form-meaning mismatch typical for hybrids. Interestingly, the participants do this even in the cases where it is grammatically impossible. Although, as the results discussed in chapter 7.6 show, heritage speakers can use unpaired hybrids referring to females without a problem.

By the way, the results presented in tables 20 and 21 demonstrate that the ungrammatical use of unpaired hybrids depend on the proficiency of the speakers. The lower the proficiency of the speakers, the more incorrect are unpaired hybrid forms they use. As I will show below, this is not the case with paired hybrids. Most interestingly, both the advanced and the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers used all paired hybrids, which allow derived feminine forms, in a feminine form in the translation task in question.

Certainly, the question arises as to the reasons for this striking results of heritage speakers. I consider that the process of language simplification is the main reason for this language behaviour of these speakers. Indeed, simplification as a language strategy for heritage speakers has been discovered and described by numerous linguists, who work with heritage speakers (Polinsky, 1997; Polinsky, 2006; Polinsky, 2008a; Lohndal et al., 2019; Scontras et al., 2015). Complicated rules are restructured into simpler rules, which saves the efforts that heritage speakers need in the use of their native language. While using feminine noun forms with nouns referring to females, heritage speakers do not only simplify the task of gender assignment and gender agreement, but also avoid the form-meaning conflict together with all the problems and misunderstandings, connected to it.

Thus, I support the supposition of Laleko (2018) according to which feminising suffixes are “characterized by a predictable and stable one-to-one mapping between meaning and form, and due to this systematicity and transparency they may be more generalizable than lexical cues, which require access to the lexical entry for each individual item” (p. 248).

Curiously, the above-presented results of my study prove once again that contemporary Russian shows the features of an analytic language, because native speakers prefer to show the gender of hybrids not by using the noun form, but by using the words, which surround the noun (semantic agreement patterns, for example). By contrast, heritage speakers prefer synthetic methods and change the form of hybrids in order to show their reference to females.

This characteristic of heritage Russian can be the result of language transfer. Truly, the German language possesses the simple suffix *-in*, which forms feminine nouns out of masculine nouns. This suffix is very productive and is very frequently used. Therefore, I conclude that heritage speakers apply the German strategy of forming feminine nouns out of masculine nouns in the Russian language.

Language transfer plays an important role in heritage languages. This has been proven in numerous linguistic studies (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Scontras et al., 2015; Montrul & Ionin, 2012; Montrul, 2012; Lohndal et al., 2019). Speaking about German as the majority language, Schwartz et al. (2014) has shown that the presence of gender agreement in German as the second native language has a positive effect on the acquisition of gender agreement in Russian. Dieser (2007) has also proved that German has a positive effect on the use of gender agreement in the Russian language by Russian-German bilinguals.

All in all, I consider that there are two main reasons for the preference of feminine forms of hybrids by heritage speakers in the situation of limited input. The first reason is the language simplification and the avoidance of form-meaning conflict. The second reason is the language transfer.

This conclusion also confirms the loss of the generic meaning component with hybrids. Heritage speakers do not use the masculine form of hybrids with reference to females, if they can avoid this use. Still, they are aware of the use of hybrids referring to females, although they use them analogously with common gender nouns as purely referential or underspecified nouns, and not as generic nouns.

By the way, I do not think that heritage speakers use feminine forms of hybrids in order to express some (negative) connotation. The frequency with which feminine forms are used prove that heritage speakers use them as female equivalents of hybrids only.

Importantly, all the results of my study on nouns in variable contexts show that monolingual Russian native speakers use more and more analytic features in the language. Heritage speakers, by contrast, prefer synthetic constructions. As most of the studies on Russian-English bilinguals show the opposite results, namely that analytic constructions are

preferred in heritage Russian, the conclusion can be made as to the role of language transfer. Heritage Russian becomes more analytic only in contact with an analytic majority language. Conversely, heritage Russian, which is used parallelly to a synthetic majority language, preserves synthetic language features.

7.11.3. Laleko's (2018, 2019) Main Issues on Paired and Unpaired Nouns.

Having discussed the results of my study, let me now describe some interesting points from the study of Laleko (2018, 2019), who paid special attention to the difference of paired and unpaired hybrids in heritage Russian. In her study, Laleko (2018, 2019) used paired and unpaired hybrids without any particular referent. Her main goal was to determine agreement patterns, which her participants used with these nouns.

Laleko (2018) found out that baseline control speakers of her study had “displayed a significant contrast between generic masculine and derived feminine forms in both adjective and verb mismatched agreement contexts (e.g., **opytnyj.m učitel'nica.f* vs. *?opytnaja.f učitel'.m* “experienced teacher”)” (p. 255). Conversely, heritage speakers treated hybrid nouns and lexically masculine nouns uniformly (Laleko, 2018, pp. 257-258). This symmetrical use of hybrids and lexically masculine nouns is, according to Laleko (2018), the result of a structural shift in heritage Russian (Laleko, 2018, pp. 257-258). In particular, Laleko (2018) shows that baseline controls treat paired hybrids as privative oppositions, with one marked (masculine) and one unmarked (feminine) member. Heritage speakers, by contrast, treat them as equipollent oppositions, that is to say as lexical oppositions with the two unmarked members.

By and large, Laleko (2018) shows that heritage speakers reorganise hybrids from having generic meaning to being specifically masculine. Paired hybrids are reorganised as members of equipollent oppositions with their feminine counterparts. Unpaired hybrids are used as specifically masculine in heritage Russian.

Importantly, Laleko (2018) shows that both baseline controls and heritage speakers “show a measurable improvement in the acceptance rates of feminine agreement forms with unpaired hybrid nouns” as compared to paired hybrids (p. 257). On this basis, the scholar concludes that Russian speakers are sensitive not only to formal, but also to pragmatic and lexical factors, when they use hybrids. In particular, they are sensitive to whether a more specific feminine form of a noun is available or not. If it is available, then heritage speakers “strongly disfavour” the use of feminine agreement with masculine noun forms (p. 257).

Laleko (2018) considers that this reorganisation happens because of phenomena such as “processing economy”, which favour more transparent forms and processes and avoid the more ambiguous of them (p. 261).

It is difficult to compare Laleko’s (2018) study with my study with regard to the avoidance of hybrids, because Laleko (2018) did not conduct such an investigation. In a similar way to my investigation discussed in chapter 4.2.4, the scholar concentrated only on gender agreement patterns with hybrids. However, there are some parallels in the conclusions of my investigation and of the study of Laleko (2018), which I would like to mention here.

First of all, I consider that the fact that heritage speakers always avoid using masculine forms of hybrids referring to females if they are aware of the possibility of using feminine counterparts, proves the Laleko’s (2018) idea that heritage speakers are sensitive to pragmatic language factors and that they tend to prefer the more specifically feminine noun forms.

Interestingly, the two control groups of my study showed no difference between the use of paired and unpaired hybrids. However, as I showed in chapter 7.4, monolingual native speakers prefer to express the difference between hybrids referring to females and hybrids referring to males via semantic (feminine versus masculine) agreement patterns. This, in turn, shows that monolingual Russian speakers have no problems with the form-meaning mismatch, represented by hybrids. They actively use masculine noun forms referring to females and demonstrate their gender pragmatically through semantic agreement patterns and through semantic references. Conversely, heritage speakers tend to avoid conflict situations if possible. Therefore, I can support the above-mentioned idea of Laleko (2018) only with regard to heritage speakers.

Secondly, as mentioned in chapter 7.8, I partially agree with the idea of Laleko (2018) as to the loss of genericness of hybrids. If the results presented in this chapter are considered, I can claim that heritage speakers avoid the use of masculine noun forms with regard to females, which supports the idea of Laleko (2018) about the lexicalisation of hybrids (p. 261). However, as is shown in chapter 7.8, unlike in Laleko’s (2018) study, the results of my study on gender agreement patterns with hybrids prove that heritage speakers use different agreement patterns with hybrids referring to females and do not prefer masculine agreement.

All in all, I believe that the language behaviour of heritage speakers depends greatly on the pragmatic situations they deal with. If hybrids are used with particular references, which is the case in my study, but which is not the case in Laleko's (2018) study, their choice of agreement patterns resembles the language behaviour of native speakers. But there are some important differences between the two types of speakers, which are presented in chapter 7.11.2. I consider that heritage speakers have no problems in using masculine forms of hybrids with respect to females in the situations where it is unavoidable (for example, in particular grammar tasks, with unpaired hybrids or in conversations, in which another participant uses masculine forms). However, if heritage speakers can avoid the form-meaning mismatch, they do so immediately and prefer the feminine counterparts of hybrids. Yet, this is not typical of monolingual Russian speakers. So, I observe one additional language restructuring feature in heritage Russian: namely the avoidance of hybrids due to the process of language simplification.

7.12. The Role of Input in the Acquisition of Nouns in Variable Contexts as Compared to Nouns in Obligatory Contexts.

So far, I have determined several important differences in gender use of exceptional nouns between heritage speakers and monolingual native speakers. The question I am going to discuss in this subchapter refers to the role of input in the acquisition of gender of exceptional nouns. Before I start the discussion, let me briefly repeat the predictions I made in chapter 5. Taking into consideration the studies of Laleko (2018) and Rodina (2008), I predicted that input has a deciding role in gender acquisition of my participants. However, I paid the reader's attention to the fact that the phenomenon of input plays a role in combination with other factors. Some of these factors are age, socio-cultural experience, sex and the influence of the majority language.

Input is definitely of importance for heritage language acquisition. The degree of this importance is a debatable question. The results of my study show that the role of input is not bounded to frequency. There are other important factors, connected with it. So, the notion of input is a complex one.

The complexity of input has already been shown in linguistic studies. For example, Rodina (2008) brings convincing arguments in favour of the complexity of the notion of input on the example of children's gender acquisition in conflict situations (p. 3). Laleko (2019) also supports the idea that input is not a simple language phenomenon and that "the effects of frequency do not always adequately account for the observed empirical facts and must be considered along with other factors, including morpho-phonological regularity, semantic

complexity, communicative salience, maturational constraints, and, in the context of L2 acquisition, dominant language transfer” (p. 171). Similarly, Corbett (1985) and other scholars consider different factors, which play a role in gender acquisition (pp. 34-38).

Rodina (2008) differentiates between the two qualitatively different principles of gender acquisition of the exceptional nouns in question. The first one, morphological or formal gender, is innate and can be acquired quickly. The other one, semantic gender, is not very easy. It requires some external knowledge, which can be acquired only from the socio-cultural experience. Thus, it requires sufficient frequency of input (Rodina, 2008, p. 113, p. 179).

Now, let me briefly consider the results of my study. First of all, the results with nouns in obligatory contexts are rather straightforward. Semantic agreement is the dominant agreement pattern with these nouns.

Table 22. Semantic Agreement in the Acquisition of Nouns in Obligatory Contexts.
The Role of Input.

	Male terms and male names ending in <i>-a/ -ja</i>	Common Gender Nouns
First Generation Immigrants	100%	95%
Advanced Heritage Speakers	99%	86%
Intermediate-to-Advanced Heritage Speakers	91%	65%

The first generation immigrants, who participated in my study, are those Russian native speakers who influence the development of the Russian language of heritage speakers most. They are called baseline speakers in linguistic research. I observe that both the first generation immigrants and heritage speakers prefer semantic agreement patterns with nouns in obligatory contexts. Moreover, I should admit, that nouns in obligatory contexts are predominantly used with semantic agreement patterns by all groups of Russian speakers. This means that the use of these nouns is rather consistent. There is no great diversity and mismatch in their use. Therefore, the input of the baseline group with regard to nouns in obligatory contexts is also characterised by the big consistency. So, it could be supposed that nouns in obligatory contexts are used target-like not only due to the frequency of input, but also due to the consistency of input.

The results of the intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers demonstrate some divergence in the use of common gender nouns. In my opinion, this divergence can also be explained by means of the interplay of input consistency and input frequency. On the one hand, one can assume that heritage speakers, whose language level is lower, receive less input and that is why they prefer the simpler agreement principle, namely formal agreement (input frequency is in play in this case) (see chapters 2, 6). On the other hand, the gender of common gender nouns depends on context and therefore is more variable. If the referent is given, as is the case in my test, the input is consistent and semantic agreement dominates. If the referent is not given, then both female and male agreement patterns are possible. In everyday life, children receive both contexts, where the referent is predetermined, and where it is not the case. This variance in input definitely leads to its higher inconsistency and therefore to more divergence in the Russian language of less proficient speakers. So, I claim that the consistency of input is of great importance for the acquisition of nouns in obligatory contexts.

There is one more interesting detail referring to nouns in obligatory contexts, which is worth mentioning. Rodina (2008) compares the use of the less frequent nouns like *mužčina* “a man” or *junoša* “a young man” with the use of the more frequent nouns like *papa* “dad” or *djadja* “uncle”. As mentioned in chapter 4.3.1, Rodina’s (2008) participants showed better results with the more frequent nouns (p. 99). On this basis, the scholar underlines the importance of input frequency for these nouns. In particular, she considers that children first learn how to use the semantic information for some frequent nouns and later extract the semantic rule out of this use (Rodina, 2008, p. 105).

Notably, my participants do not show any difference between the nouns mentioned by Rodina (2008), although all of these nouns were used in my test. All of these nouns were predominantly used with semantic agreement patterns. I think that the most important reason, why my participants make no errors with such nouns as *junoša* “young man” or *mužčina* “man” is the fact that these nouns are frequent in everyday life. For children, nouns like *papa* “dad” and *djadja* “uncle” are more frequent, but adults use both pairs of the above-given nouns equally frequently. As my participants have acquired a stable vocabulary and stable grammatical rules, they use the above-mentioned nouns on the level of monolingual native speakers.

Another interesting idea of Rodina (2008) is a special status of proper names, because of their simple semantic structure: “Although all of them denote a male, papa-type nouns have additional meaning, while proper names do not. This additional semantic content

cannot be learnt on a single exposure, therefore frequency comes into play” (p.108). Again, my results do not show any difference in the use of male names and male terms ending in a vowel. This shows that adult advanced heritage speakers have no problems with nouns in obligatory contexts, even if their semantic structure is more complicated.

On the whole, the results of my study with nouns in obligatory contexts demonstrate that both input frequency and input consistency play an important role in the acquisition of nouns in obligatory contexts. It should be noted that the role of input frequency has often been discussed in linguistic literature. It is the importance of input consistency, which I want to pay the reader’s attention to.

Let me now start with the discussion of my results with nouns in variable contexts. The table 23 below summarizes the main results with these nouns. The results of the baseline speakers are shown in comparison to the results of heritage speakers.

Table 23. Agreement Patterns in the Acquisition of Nouns in Variable Contexts.
The Role of Input.

	Female Names Ending in <i>-ik/ -ok</i>	Hybrids Referring to Females
First Generation Immigrants	Mixed – 16% Semantic – 83% Syntactic – 1%	Mixed – 58% Semantic – 25% Syntactic – 17%
Advanced Heritage Speakers	Mixed – 30% Semantic – 48% Syntactic – 22%	Mixed – 34% Semantic – 34% Syntactic – 30%
Intermediate-to-Advanced Heritage Speakers	Mixed – 15% Semantic – 45% Syntactic – 32%	Mixed – 15% Semantic – 40% Syntactic – 45%

The most puzzling observation on the basis of these results is the relatively high percentage of use of mixed agreement with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* (30%) as compared to the results of the baseline speakers (16%). Mixed agreement represents a very

complicated grammatical structure, which is not typical of the German language and is seldom used in the Russian language. It transpired that the speakers with limited language input use complicated language structures more frequently than the more proficient baseline speakers. This fact puts a question mark over the importance of the input in language acquisition.

As my results show, nouns in variable contexts are characterised by the strong variability of agreement patterns. This is the case with both baseline and heritage speakers. However, this variability is different, depending on the group of speakers. In my opinion, this is the case, because the input, which heritage speakers get from baseline speakers, is inconsistent. This inconsistency leads to the divergence in heritage language, when nouns in variable contexts are concerned.

As previously mentioned, female names ending in a consonant are acquired at pre-school age (Rodina, 2008, p. 133). So, the divergence in the use of these nouns is already taking place at this age. Due to the inconsistency of language input, heritage speakers use nouns in variable contexts differently from baseline speakers. Similar to monolingual native speakers, they use all three agreement patterns with these nouns. Yet, they use them in different proportions.

As I showed in chapter 7.6, the divergence in the use of female names ending in a consonant leads to the further restructuring of heritage Russian, which is adapted to deal with hybrids. As a reminder, hybrids are acquired after the age of 7, when the role of majority language begins to grow for young heritage speakers. That is why the acquisition of hybrids in heritage language remains incomplete. They are used in accordance with female names ending in a consonant in heritage Russian.

The arguments I have presented in this chapter suggest that input consistency plays a sufficient role in the acquisition of the exceptional nouns under consideration. The variability of grammar structures, which can be used with nouns in question, leads to input inconsistency. As a result, structural changes can be observed in the grammar of heritage speakers. The more inconsistent the language input is, the more divergent is the variety of heritage language structures.

7.13. Conclusions.

Now, let me draw the main conclusions. The results of my study show that heritage speakers differ from monolingual native speakers in that they use similar agreement patterns with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* and with hybrids. In this way, heritage speakers demonstrate that they are not sensitive to the genericness of hybrids, which leads to the process of the covert restructuring of hybrids. Particularly, for heritage speakers, the use of mixed agreement with hybrids and with female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* is based on the formal and semantic mismatch only.

This is not the case with monolingual Russian speakers, however. They use nouns in obligatory contexts and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* with semantic agreement patterns. Thus, form-meaning mismatch does not result in the use of mixed agreement in contemporary standard Russian. Hybrids represent the only noun class, which is predominantly used with mixed agreement speakers and it is the only noun class, which has the feature of genericness. So, genericness is considered to play an important role in mixed agreement in contemporary standard Russian.

Next, I observe the diachronic change in the contemporary standard Russian language, which is not present in heritage Russian. I showed that contemporary standard Russian demonstrates more and more analytic features, which are connected first and foremost with the predominance of semantic agreement. There is a tendency to realise gender with the help of surrounding words and not with the help of the morphological form of a noun. No such tendency has been observed in heritage Russian.

Besides, the results of my study with nouns in variable contexts prove my prediction that the choice of agreement patterns strongly depends on the proficiency of the speakers. Formal agreement is preferred by less proficient speakers. As a reminder, Rodina (2008) explains the dominance of formal rules in gender mismatch contexts by their dependency on the social experience: "learning formal cues is easier and faster than learning the semantic cues: the former are grammar-internal, while the latter are extra-grammatical, and as such they have to be integrated into the language system" (p. 178). Moreover, "The semantic rule [...] being based on the universal notion of natural gender, is developed slowly depending on frequency. Thus it appears to be experience-dependent" (p. 113). Due to the dependency of the acquisition of hybrids on the socio-cultural experience, they are acquired late. That is why heritage speakers do not acquire this noun class completely.

This chapter also shows that the use of mixed agreement is dependent on the proficiency of the speakers. Less proficient heritage speakers use less mixed agreement

patterns with hybrids. The reason for this is the loss of the hybrids' genericness and the higher reliance on the formal agreement cues. So, less proficient heritage speakers use less mixed agreement patterns, because formal agreement plays a more important role for them and overrides other agreement patterns.

Another interesting result of my study deals with the optionality of agreement patterns with hybrids. Importantly, in spite of the language restructuring in heritage Russian, heritage speakers do not lose the agreement variability of hybrids and female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*. However, they reallocate the frequency of use of these agreement patterns.

Moreover, the arguments I have presented in this chapter suggest that input consistency plays a sufficient role in the acquisition of the exceptional nouns under consideration. The variability of grammar structures, which can be used with nouns in question, leads to input inconsistency. As a result, structural changes can be observed in the grammar of heritage speakers. The more inconsistent the language input is, the more divergent is the variety of heritage language structures.

As a summary, limited input results in language restructuring of heritage Russian with regard to gender agreement. Although heritage speakers preserve the variability of gender agreement patterns with nouns that represent form-meaning conflict, they follow different criteria for the choice of agreement patterns. As heritage speakers use grammatically correct agreement patterns, I refer to the language restructuring of my participants as covert restructuring.

Chapter 8. Conclusion.

8.1. Summary of the Dissertation. Contribution of the Study.

This dissertation has examined the phenomenon of gender agreement in heritage Russian. The research is based on the results of the experimental study, conducted with adult advanced Russian heritage speakers. The main goal of the investigation, described in this thesis, is the presentation of the main principles of gender agreement patterns in situations of form-meaning conflict. In particular, I have tested and analysed the ability of high proficient heritage speakers to use agreement patterns with the four exceptional noun classes (hybrids referring to females, common gender nouns, male names and male terms ending in *-a/ -ja*, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*).

The thesis has aimed to answer a very important question: is it possible that heritage speakers use gender agreement patterns with the exceptional nouns under consideration in a target-consistent manner? If not, how do heritage speakers diverge from monolingual Russian native speakers in the use of agreement patterns and why do they diverge?

The results of my study have shown that advanced heritage speakers are able to achieve target-like language proficiency with regard to gender agreement patterns under specific conditions. In particular, I have indicated that advanced heritage speakers use gender agreement with the exceptional nouns in obligatory contexts (common gender nouns, male terms and male names ending in a vowel) target-like. I argue that the reason for this is first and foremost the fact that these nouns do not allow optionality in gender agreement patterns. They are used with semantic agreement. As a consequence, heritage speakers get consistent language input from baseline speakers. Therefore, they acquire these nouns quickly and use them according to the rules without big problems. Advanced heritage speakers seem to have no problems with the form-meaning mismatch, which is characteristic of these nouns.

It has been shown that the language behaviour of intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers with nouns in obligatory contexts is similar to that of advanced heritage speakers. The majority of the participants of this group preferred semantic gender agreement with these nouns. In other words, they used these nouns target-like. However, the subjects in question used about one quarter of the given common gender nouns with morphological agreement patterns. On this account, I have suggested that common gender nouns represent a greater challenge for intermediate-to-advanced heritage speakers, than male

names and male terms ending in a vowel. I believe that the reason for this difference lies in the dependency of common gender nouns on the pragmatic information, that is to say it lies in their referentiality. I argue that less proficient speakers, who have not got enough social experience, have more problems with referential gender and therefore show worse results with referential nouns. Moreover, this finding supports the idea, expressed in previous studies (Laleko, 2018; Laleko, 2019; Rodina, 2008), according to which less experienced speakers of Russian tend to use formal gender agreement in the situations of form-meaning conflict.

Another important idea, which I have explored in this thesis, is the role of optionality in heritage language acquisition. The comparison of nouns in obligatory contexts with nouns in variable contexts clearly demonstrates that greater optionality of agreement patterns causes difficulties even for advanced heritage speakers. First of all, it has been shown that advanced heritage speakers are not confused by the form-meaning mismatch of nouns in variable contexts and use gender agreement patterns with them without difficulty. Moreover, they have preserved all three agreement patterns (feminine, masculine, mixed) with these nouns. Yet still, a close analysis of the results of the study has revealed the divergence in the allocation of these patterns. Put differently, the research has shown that the use of gender agreement with nouns in variable contexts by heritage speakers deviates from its use by monolinguals, although heritage speakers make no overt errors with these nouns in their tests. This evidence supports the theory of covert restructuring in heritage languages.

Importantly, this thesis provides the explanation of the reasons which cause covert restructuring with respect to nouns in variable contexts. In particular, I have shown that the acquisition of nouns in variable contexts by heritage speakers remains incomplete. According to Rodina (2008), the nouns in question are acquired late in monolingual language acquisition. Hybrids are fully acquired only at the primary school age, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* are acquired a bit earlier. As is known, in the majority of cases, heritage language acquisition meets new difficulties, when heritage speakers start to go to school, because of the growing role of the German language in the learning process and in the communication with friends. As a result, heritage speakers acquire female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* before school and transfer their use of agreement patterns with these nouns to hybrids, the acquisition of which remains incomplete.

Thus, I suggest that the acquisition of hybrids in heritage Russian is incomplete and this leads to covert restructuring in gender agreement with these nouns. To be precise, I argue that heritage speakers fail to acquire the generic component of hybrids' semantic structure and therefore treat hybrids referring to females similarly to female names ending in

-ik/ -ok. Namely, they base the use of agreement patterns with hybrids referring to females not on the juxtaposition of their generic and feminine meaning components, but only on the form-meaning conflict. As a result, they use the same agreement patterns with hybrids and with female names in question. By contrast, monolingual speakers are aware of the generic component of the semantic structure of hybrids. Therefore, they base their choice of agreement patterns with hybrids on the semantic structure of hybrids, namely on its generic and feminine components.

Apart from that, the research data have revealed a difference in the use of female names ending in *-ik/ -ok* between heritage speakers and monolingual speakers. Particularly, both groups of heritage speakers used a good deal more formal agreement patterns with the nouns under consideration as compared to monolingual native speakers and first generation immigrants. The preference of formal agreement by less proficient speakers is a well-known phenomenon in linguistic theory. Firstly, it is “more economical in processing terms” because of its grammar-internal status (Laleko, 2018, p. 248). Secondly, the use of formal agreement is independent from the socio-cultural experience of speakers and therefore is simpler and clearer for them (Rodina, 2008, p. 172).

So, the findings of my research support the idea that heritage speakers’ use of formal agreement depends on the speakers’ proficiency level. What is more, the research data have established the dependency of the use of mixed agreement patterns on the proficiency level of the speakers.

Another example of language restructuring with respect to the exceptional nouns in question is the avoidance of hybrids. In contrast to monolingual native speakers, heritage speakers have been shown to avoid the use of hybrids referring to females whenever possible, although, according to the results of my test, they have no problems with their use. I have explained this language behaviour by means of the process of language simplification, typical for heritage speakers.

The careful examination of the research data made it possible to determine interesting tendencies not only in heritage Russian, but also in the development of standard Russian. In particular, I have indicated that monolingual Russian native speakers use the semantic agreement criterion in their choice of gender agreement with the four exceptional nouns. I argue that this language behaviour is an example of the use of analytic means in the Russian language. To be precise, Russian native speakers express gender value of the exceptional nouns not through the morphological change of a noun, that is to say synthetically, but with the help of additional words (modifiers and predicates), that is analytically. My assertion

confirms the idea expressed in previous studies of some Russian Slavists (Golev, 2013; Bunames, 2014; Laskova, 2001) about the active change of the Russian language and about the development of analytic features in it.

To cut a long story short, these are the main issues, determined in this thesis:

- heritage speakers are able to achieve target-like language proficiency,
- advanced heritage speakers have no problems with the form-meaning mismatch,
- referential nouns represent more difficulties for less proficient speakers,
- mixed agreement is present in heritage Russian,
- the use of agreement patterns depends on language proficiency of the speakers,
- optionality in grammar leads to covert restructuring in heritage languages,
- input consistency plays an important role in heritage language acquisition and leads to incomplete acquisition,
- standard Russian is characterised by a greater development of analytic features.

This thesis contributes to the investigation of the broad topic of heritage languages. Important language issues, such as main principles of bi- and multilingualism, its limits and possibilities, factors that influence heritage speakers, are explored in this work.

In contrast to the majority of the studies on heritage languages, this thesis deals with advanced heritage speakers. The choice of high proficient participants allowed me to give an answer to the main question of the study, namely if it is possible for heritage speakers to achieve target-like language proficiency. As a result, I was able to give a positive answer to this question and to point out the main difficulties which heritage speakers have in language acquisition. I hope that my positive forecast with regard to the abilities of heritage speakers will motivate parents and heritage language teachers to do their best in supporting children in their acquisition and/or learning of heritage languages.

The participation of advanced heritage speakers in my experiment enabled the accounting of both divergence and convergence between monolingual and bilingual Russian native speakers. Moreover, I was able to analyse the divergence in heritage Russian in the absence of overt errors. Thus, the study has contributed to the investigation of covert restructuring in heritage languages, which is a rather new and promising field of linguistic research. Indeed, the investigation of covert restructuring enables the identification of issues, which could be otherwise overlooked in the study of heritage languages.

The thesis provides novel support for the idea that it is the variability of grammatically correct language structures used in one and the same situation, which results in difficulties

for heritage speakers. Moreover, it has been shown that such variability leads to inconsistent language input, which confuses heritage speakers.

Regarding language input, the testing of different participant groups allowed me to compare the language behaviour of heritage, baseline and control Russian speakers. As a result, I was able to show that baseline speakers preserve target-like knowledge of Russian. What is more, heritage speakers are also able to achieve target-like proficiency. However, as previously mentioned, they meet difficulties in the situations of inconsistent input. These results of the study provide support for the idea of the importance of input, and especially of input consistency, in bi- and multilingual language acquisition. Although, the importance of some additional factors should not be ignored either.

Next, the methodology adopted in my experimental study has made it possible to investigate both adjectival and verbal components of the noun's gender agreement at the same time. This allowed me to examine not only feminine and masculine agreement, but also mixed agreement patterns. To my knowledge, the topic of mixed agreement in heritage languages has not been paid much attention in previous research. The findings of my study have shown that mixed agreement pattern is present in the language of advanced heritage speakers, although it is used slightly differently than in standard Russian.

In addition to the determination of principles of the use of gender agreement patterns in heritage Russian, the comparison of heritage and standard Russian has allowed me to make some important observations with respect to standard Russian. Most importantly, the dominance of the semantic agreement criterion with nouns, which are characterised by form-meaning mismatch, has been established. More than that, the detailed data analysis has indicated that even the masculine and feminine components of mixed agreement are based on the semantic agreement criterion.

Furthermore, I have examined the preference of the semantic criterion in gender agreement in combination with the previous studies on agreement in standard Russian. This examination has resulted in an important observation that standard Russian is receiving more and more analytic language features, which may lead to the transformation of Russian into an analytic language in the distant future. Thus, the thesis introduces new support for the idea of the development of analytic features in Russian, expressed by some Russian Slavists (Golev, 2013; Bunames, 2014, Laskova, 2001).

At the same time, the thesis provides no support for the assumption that heritage speakers tend to use analytic language structures, declared by American scholars (cf. Laleko, 2010, p. 14; Polinsky, 2011b, p. 323; Montrul & Polinsky, 2013, p. 141; Mikhaylova,

2018, p. 270). The advanced heritage speakers, who participated in my study, showed no preference of analytic language features. This contradiction reveals the importance of language transfer in heritage language acquisition. Indeed, my participants master a synthetic language as their major (German), which is not the case with Russian bilinguals in the USA.

8.2. Further Issues.

My findings have given answers to some important questions on gender in heritage languages. Moreover, they have showed some important tendencies in heritage and in standard Russian. However, many more questions remained unanswered. Some of them have been raised in this study. Indeed, the topic of gender in heritage languages represents a fertile field for research.

In what follows, I would like to present my ideas as to the research areas, which should be paid more attention. First of all, I believe that the investigation of advanced heritage speakers should be extended. Due to their high motivation and solid language experience, these speakers are able to reach target-like language proficiency. In this way, these speakers can become useful in the political, international, cultural, military and other fields of social and state life.

Another important issue, which should be investigated more is covert language restructuring. Indeed, the fact that advanced heritage speakers make no overt errors gives the false impression that they do not diverge from monolinguals. In order to establish the cases of language divergence between the speakers in question, a detailed analysis of language peculiarities of both groups of speakers is needed. Only if heritage speakers are aware of their divergence from monolinguals, can they overcome this divergence.

The reason for language divergence without overt errors lies in the possibility to use some Russian grammatical structures optionally. It means that they can be substituted by alternative grammatical structures. The thesis has demonstrated the importance of such an optionality and its influence on language development in both standard and heritage varieties of the Russian language.

Optionality is not a rare phenomenon in linguistics. Regarding Russian, for example, Kimmelman (2009) examines the optionality of possessive reflexive pronouns such as *svoj* “mine, your”, which can be substituted by plain possessive pronouns such as *moj* “mine” (Kimmelman, 2009, p.10). Moreover, the linguist points out that possessive reflexives are optional in numerous languages (Japanese, Malayalam). More examples of optionality in

Russian grammar can be found in chapter 2. If I were to dig deeper into the matter, I feel confident that I would find many more examples of optionality in Russian. However, it goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. Anyway, I believe that optionality and its role in heritage language acquisition can become a fruitful research area in linguistics.

One more language phenomenon, which is worth investigating in detail, is mixed agreement. The results of the present study have shown that mixed agreement is present in heritage Russian and that it is based on principles, which are different from those in standard Russian. However, more research is needed in order to extend the principles of the use of mixed agreement in heritage Russian. For instance, it would be interesting to know if advanced heritage speakers with a genderless majority language, such as English, have difficulties in the use of mixed agreement and what kind of difficulties they are.

Besides, the use of mixed agreement patterns by low-level heritage speakers is of interest. It can be speculated that low-level speakers do not use mixed agreement, because of the difficulty of this grammatical structure, but empirical evidence with exact data would be of great interest for the study of heritage language acquisition.

More than that, it would be useful to conduct a study with low-level heritage speakers, which would be similar to this one. In this way, the data of this thesis could be compared with the results of less proficient speakers. As a result of this comparison, new information about gender in heritage languages could be gained. Based on the results of the present study and on Laleko's (2018) study, it can be assumed that low-level heritage speakers would prefer formal agreement patterns in the situations of form-meaning conflict. Although, more empirical evidence is needed in order to confirm this assumption.

In addition to the heritage language study, the thesis provides information on the development of standard Russian. In particular, I argue that monolingual Russian native speakers follow the semantic agreement criterion in gender agreement of exceptional nouns. In my opinion, this position should be paid more attention to in future research on the Russian language.

Moreover, I have shown that Slavic linguists investigate analytic features in Russian. Yet still, more evidence is needed in order to formulate solid predictions as to the further development of Russian. Especially interesting is the question of if there is a possibility of Russian becoming an analytic language. In order to answer this question, the investigation of various grammatical structures in Russian is needed.

Furthermore, following Rodina (2008), I assume that heritage speakers fail to acquire fully nouns in variable contexts, because of their late acquisition in monolingual Russian.

Rodina (2008) has raised this question in her dissertation. However, the exact age, when hybrids should be acquired, is still unknown. More research in this area is required.

In this dissertation I have investigated an interesting and exciting theme of gender agreement with exceptional nouns in heritage Russian. The investigation has provided some new insights into this difficult topic. For me, working on this dissertation has been both an exciting and a demanding task. The results of advanced heritage speakers were difficult to predict. At first sight, they seemed to be rather ambiguous. Yet still, the detailed analysis of the data enabled me to gain new knowledge not only in the study of heritage Russian language but also in the study of standard Russian.

I hope that this research paper will be useful to scholars, who work with bilingual and monolingual Russian speakers. I am happy to have been able to contribute to such an exciting research issue as heritage languages.

Genuskongruenz im Russischen als Herkunftssprache

In dieser Arbeit werden die Unterschiede in der Genuskongruenz der belebten Substantive zwischen den ein- und zweisprachigen russischen Muttersprachlern und Muttersprachlerinnen mit Hilfe einer empirischen Studie untersucht. Speziell werden die vier Sonderfälle betrachtet: Hybridnomen (z.B., *doktor* „Arzt/Ärztin“), Substantive der dualen Genera (z.B., *sirota* „Waise“), weibliche Vornamen in der Verkleinerungsform mit den Suffixen *-ik/ -ok* (z.B., *Irč-ik*), Substantive, die männliche Personen bezeichnen, aber deren Form mit einem Vokal endet.

Die Analyse der Ergebnisse dieser Studie ergibt folgende Feststellungen.

Die fortgeschrittenen russischen Herkunftssprecher/-innen können mit den grammatischen Strukturen, die keine Variabilität darstellen – d.h. mit den Substantiven der dualen Genera und mit männlichen Personenbezeichnungen mit femininen Endungen - das Niveau eines/einer Muttersprachlers/Muttersprachlerin erreichen. Mit den Substantiven, die variable Genuskongruenz erlauben (weibliche Vornamen mit Suffixes *-ik/-ok*, Hybridnomen) wurde eine verdeckte Restrukturierung der Sprache beobachtet. Die Sprecher/-innen nutzen die grammatischen Strukturen ohne sichtbare Fehler, aber trotzdem anders als es die Muttersprachler/-innen tun würden. Im Fall der Nutzung der gemischten Kongruenz liegt die Restrukturierung daran, dass die Herkunftssprecher/-innen das generische Maskulinum nicht erwerben.

Es sollte jedoch beachtet werden, dass die Nutzung der Genuskongruenz stark vom Sprachniveau eines/einer Sprechers/Sprecherin abhängt. Außerdem wurde festgestellt, dass Referentialität eine besondere Schwierigkeit für die Herkunftssprecher/-innen darstellt.

Was die einsprachigen Muttersprachler/-innen angeht, wird es gezeigt, dass die Abhängigkeit dieser Sprecher/-innen bei der Wahl der Genuskongruenz von dem lexikalischen Kriterium die Tendenz der russischen Sprache zum analytischen Sprachbau beweist.

Gender Agreement Patterns in Heritage Russian

In this dissertation, I raise the issue of the grammatical gender in Russian as a heritage language. In particular, this thesis aims to determine the major principles of use of gender agreement patterns with the four classes of exceptional nouns (hybrids referring to females, common gender nouns, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*, male terms and male names ending in *-a/ -ja*) in heritage Russian.

For this purpose, I have conducted an experimental study on gender agreement, which consists of two big tasks, a translation task and a multiple-choice task.

A detailed analysis of the results of the study has led to the following conclusions. Advanced heritage speakers are able to achieve the target-like language proficiency in gender agreement in transparent contexts and in some situations of form-meaning mismatch. The use of agreement patterns strongly depends on the speakers' language proficiency. Less proficient speakers tend to have more problems with referential nouns.

Importantly, this dissertation provides evidence for the importance of variability for successful heritage language acquisition. Variability of grammatical structures leads to inconsistency of input which makes it harder for heritage speakers to acquire these structures and leads to incomplete acquisition. As a result, heritage speakers fail to acquire the generic component of the semantic structure of hybrid nouns. This in turn results in the divergence in the use of agreement patterns by monolingual and bilingual speakers with the exceptional nouns, which allow variability (hybrids, female names ending in *-ik/ -ok*). This divergence is realised without overt errors and represents an example of covert language restructuring.

Apart from that, the thesis touches upon the question of the development of standard Russian and provides evidence for the increase of analytic features in the Russian language.

Appendix.

Survey. Heritage Speakers.

1. Wie alt sind Sie?
2. Wann waren Sie zum ersten Mal mit der deutschen Sprache konfrontiert?
3. Wie oft nutzen Sie Russisch in Ihrem Alltag?
4. Mit wem kommunizieren Sie auf Russisch?
5. Mit wem kommunizieren Sie auf Deutsch?
6. Haben Sie einen Russischunterricht besucht? Wenn ja, dann: Wie viele oft und wie lange?
7. Besuchen Sie aktuell einen Russischunterricht?
8. Interessieren Sie sich für russische Sprache und russische Kultur?
9. Sind Sie stolz auf Ihren russischen Hintergrund?

Survey. First Generation Immigrants.

1. Сколько Вам лет?
2. Сколько лет Вы изучали русский язык в школе?
3. Вы заканчивали университет?
4. Вы интересуетесь русским языком и культурой?
5. Вы гордитесь своими русскими/ русскоязычными корнями?
6. Как часто Вы общаетесь по-русски? С кем?
7. Как часто Вы общаетесь по-немецки? С кем?

Survey. Monolingual Native Speakers.

1. Сколько Вам лет?
2. Сколько лет Вы изучали русский язык в школе?
3. Вы заканчивали университет?
4. Вы интересуетесь русским языком и культурой?
5. Вы гордитесь своими русскими/ русскоязычными корнями?

Task 1. Heritage Speakers.

Übersetzen Sie bitte die folgenden Wortkombinationen vom Deutschen ins Russische.

1. Unsere junge Direktorin hat das geschrieben
2. Meine kluge Geschäftspartnerin hat gearbeitet
3. Eine erfahrene Ärztin hat mich operiert
4. Mein neuer Kollege ist gekommen
5. Die lustige Reiseleiterin hat wieder gelacht
6. Eine weise Pädagogin hat sie gelehrt
7. Ein fairer Richter hat so entschieden
8. Ein sturer Linkshänder hat das geschrieben
9. Ein kleiner Waisenknabe hat geweint
10. Ein treuer Diener hat ihm geholfen
11. Mein Lieblingsonkel hat gesprochen
12. Ein hübscher Mann ist vorbeigekommen
13. Eine gute Sekretärin hat das getippt
14. Ein bescheidener Leisetreter hat geschwiegen
15. Ein schlauer Schleimer hat gelogen
16. Ein attraktiver Junge hat gelächelt
17. Ein cooler Schiffsjunge hat getobt
18. Der sportliche Sascha hat viel gegessen
19. Ein alter Opa hat dort gegessen
20. Ein rastloser Zappelphilipp hat getanzt
21. Eine tapfere Pilotin hat ihm geholfen
22. Die mutige Kriegerin hat gekämpft
23. Die bekannte Leutnantin hat befohlen
24. Die einsame Astronautin hat geantwortet
25. Der freche Streithahn hat geschlafen
26. Dieser Weichling hat sich eingecremt
27. Der ewige Säufer hat wieder getrunken
28. Der witzige Kolja hat das gesagt
29. Der traurige Vasja hat gewartet
30. Unser Lieblingspapa hat etwas mitgebracht

Task 1. First Generation Immigrants. Monolingual Native Speakers.

Bilden Sie aus diesen Wörtern Sätze .

1. наш/а + молодой/ая + директор + написал/а (директор = женщина)
2. мой/я + умный/ая + партнёр + работал/а (партнёр = женщина)
3. опытный/ая + врач + прооперировал/а + меня (врач = женщина)
4. мой/я + новый/ая + коллега + пришёл/ла (коллега = мужчина)
5. весёлый/ая + гид + смеялся/ась (гид = женщина)
6. мудрый/ая + педагог + учил/а (педагог = женщина)
7. справедливый/ая + судья + решил/а (судья = мужчина)
8. упрямый/ая + левша + написал/а (левша = мужчина)
9. маленький/ая + плакса + плакал/а (плакса = мужчина)
10. верный/ая + слуга + помог/ла + ему (слуга = мужчина)
11. любимый/ая + дядя + сказал/а
12. красивый/ая + мужчина + пришёл/ла + мимо
13. хорош-ий/ая + секретарь + напечатал/а (секретарь = женщина)
14. скром-ный/ая + тихоня + молчал/а (тихоня = мужчина)
15. хитр-ый/ая + подлиза + соврал/а (подлиза = мужчина)
16. привлекатель-ный/ая + юноша + улыбался/ась
17. крут-ой/ая + юнга + прыгал/а
18. спортив-ный/ая + Вася + ел/а
19. стар-ый/ая + бабушка + сидел/а
20. неугомон-ный/ая + непоседа + танцевал/а (непоседа = мужчина)
21. храбр-ый/ая + пилот + помог/ла (пилот = женщина)
22. смел-ый/ая + воин + сражался/ась (воин = женщина)
23. известн-ый/ая + лейтенант + приказал/а (лейтенант = женщина)
24. одинок-ий/ая + космонавт + ответил/а (космонавт = женщина)
25. скучн-ый/ая + задира + спал/а (задира = мужчина)
26. это-т/та + лентяй + накремился/ась (лентяй = женщина)
27. вечн-ый/ая + пьяница + выпил/а (пьяница = мужчина)
28. смешн-ой/ая + Коля + сказал/а
29. грустн-ый/ая + Вася + ждал/а
30. любим-ый/ая + папа + принес/ла

Task 2. All Participants.

Wählen Sie bitte die richtige Variante. Unterstreichen Sie die korrekte Antwort.

1. Бедный мой брат! Наш /а бедняга пош-ёл/ла работать.
2. Это Юля. Она - умн-ый/-ая литературовед, котор-ая/-ый прочита-л/-ла лекцию.
3. Дорог-ой/-ая папа наконец-то приш-ёл/-ла.
4. Наш- /-а Ирчик всегда был- /-а впереди.
5. Константин – больш-ой/-ая лакомка, котор-ый/-ая больше всего любил-а мороженое.
6. Людмила Петровна – хорош-ий/-ая учитель. Эт-от/-а учитель выучил- /-а несколько поколений.
7. Это не я, это наш- /-а дядя не мо-г/-гла уговориться.
8. Любим-ый/-ая Дашунчик опять опоздал- /-а.
9. Разве такое сделает хороший мальчик? Это мог- /-ла быть только неблагодарн-ый/-ая неряха.
10. Я всегда хотела быть юристом. Опытн-ый/-ая юрист смог- /-ла бы ответить на эти вопросы.
11. Мо-й/-я дедушка долго сидел- /-а на балконе по вечерам.
12. Викусик был- /-а красив-ым/-ой.
13. Никто не любил Влада. Эт-от/-а зубрила был- /-а т-от/-а ещё ябеда.
14. Это Маша. Это настоящ-ий/-ая борец за свободу. Никогда не сдавал-ся/-ась.
15. Всегда весёл-ый/-ая Ольчик сегодня приш-ёл/-ла в школу в плохом настроении.
16. Опытн-ый/-ая юнга уже долго работал- /-ла на корабле.
17. Мой муж – больш-ой/-ая умница. Эт-от/-а умница работал /-а всю ночь напролёт.
18. Я очень уважаю Галину Владимировну. Эт-от/а справедлив-ый/-ая шеф заслужил /-а хорошего отношения окружающих.
19. Дорог-ой/-ая Светик включил /-а мне на ночь светик.
20. Глуп-ый/-ая Федя съел /-а медведя.
21. Тво-й/-я брат-верзила достал /-а до потолка.
22. Умн-ый/-ая Маша-бригадир купил /-а трубку.

23. Все наблюдали за состязанием. Малень-**ий/-ая** девочка-боксёр ударил **_-а** соперника.
24. У меня мало друзей. Но мо-**й/-я** одноклассник-левша всегда поддерживал **_-а** меня.
25. Опасн-**ый/-ая** маньяк-убийца гулял **_-а** по улицам Нью-Йорка.
26. А главой всей банды был **_-а** жесток-**ий/-ая** Соня-пират.
27. Наш **_-а** привереда-сосед опять нажаловал-**ся/-ась** полиции.
28. Мо-**й/-я** недотёпа-сын снова прогулял **_-а** школу.
29. Мо-**й/-я** пройдоха-отец никогда мне не помогал **_-а**.
30. Наш **_-а** смельчак-мама смог **_-ла** защитить нас.
31. Всеобщ-**ий/-ая** любимчик-Алёнушка надел **_-а** красивое платье.
32. Ленив-**ый/-ая** неуч-Катерина всё равно мог **_-ла** хорошо читать.
33. Юля у нас главная. Эт-**от/-а** дрожащ-**ий/-ая** начальник не хотел **_-а** одевать куртку.
34. Я закончила юридический факультет. Коротко обо мне: замученн-**ый/-ая** юрист бросил **_-а** своё дело.
35. Это – тётя Валя. Наш **_-а** вечно ругающ-**ийся/-аяся** сторож сидел **_-а** здесь всю ночь.
36. Обиженн-**ый/-ая** депутат Ангела Меркель предложил **_-а** очередной закон.
37. Я люблю змея Толика. Эт-**от/-а** гадюка очень красиво извил-**ся/-ась**.
38. Правящ-**ий/-ая** старейшина Владимир Путин согласил-**ся/-ась** на проект.
39. Аркадий – хороший уборщик. Проверенн-**ый/-ая** чистюля опять убрал **_-а** лучше всех.
40. Красавица отказала богачу. Отвергнут-**ый/-ая** вельможа стал **_-а** плакать.
41. Кричащ-**ий/-ая** Ленчик надеял-**ся/-ась**, что её услышат.
42. Стесняющ-**ийся/-аяся** Ирок не надевал **_-а** короткие юбки.
43. Наряженн-**ый/-ая** Юльчик был **_-а** самой красивой на празднике.
44. Мужик ошибся. Неряха, удивлённ-**ый/-ая** своей ошибкой, постарал-**ся/-ась** исправить её.
45. Испуганн-**ый/-ая** Наташик продолжал **_-а** идти через лес.
46. Улыбающ-**ийся/-аяся** Костя обожал **_-а** всякие передраги.
47. Поруганн-**ый/-ая** мужчина не хотел **_-а** возвращаться домой.
48. Удручённ-**ый/-ая** слуга отказал-**ся/-ась** от обеда.
49. Прыгающ-**ий/-ая** юноша наступил **_-а** кошке на хвост.

50. Моя жена работает на конюшне. Конюх, любим-**ый/-ая** мной больше всех на свете, постоянно занят **/-а** работой.
51. Маша опять написала обо мне стих. Гений, одарённ-**ый/-ая** талантом от Бога, никогда не переставал **/-а** писать стихи.
52. Все знают Дарью Донцову. Автор, написавш-**ая/-ий** сотни романов, дал **/-а** сегодня интервью.
53. У меня родилась сестричка. Карапуз, пьющ-**ий/-ая** мамино молоко, изредка поглядывал **/-а** на меня.
54. Алик вам строит рожи. Кривляка, оставленн-**ый/-ая** всеми, продолжал **/-а** показывать язык.
55. Мой сын обожает шоколадки. Сладёна, накормленн-**ый/-ая** сладкой кашей, всё же побежал **/-а** за десертом.
56. Он не понимал ничего. Тупица, бросивш-**ий/-ая** учёбу, решил **/-а** стать пиратом.
57. Казалось, Виктор ничего не ел. Худышка, шатающ-**ийся/-аяся** на ветру, не признавал **/-а**, что ему нужно поправиться.
58. Галок, занимающ-**ийся/-аяся** танцами, подружил-**ся/-ась** с новой ученицей.
59. Машунчик, написавш-**ий/-ая** мне письмо, пропал **/-а**.
60. Лизок, всеми покинут-**ый/-ая**, пош-**ёл/ла** по магазинам.
61. Надюшик, подгоняем-**ый/-ая** Владом, еле успел **/-а** надеть платье.
62. Петя, щиплящ-**ий/-ая** травку, любил **/-а** топтать своих кур.
63. Боря, поющ-**ий/-ая** без умолку, выпил **/-а** ещё один бокал вина.
64. Дядя, нагнанн-**ый/-ая** полицией, сдал-**ся/-ась**.
65. Володя, убит-**ый/-ая** нв войне, всё ещё истекал **/-а** кровью.
66. Вадим – болшо**й/ая** вредина. **Он/она** всегда ругал-**ся/ась**.
67. Маша – известн**ый/ая** психолог. **Он/она** выступил**/а** в Москве.
68. Это мо-**й/-я** любим-**ый/-ая** Фома. **Он/она** меня всегда поддерживал**/а**.
69. Сончик не любил **/-а** колу. **Он/она** пил **/а** много воды.
70. Моя мама – настоящ-**ий/-ая** гений. **Она/он** смог-**/ла** меня поддержать в этой сложной ситуации.

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Selbständigkeitserklärung

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Selbständigkeitserklärung zur Dissertation

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der von mir eingereichten Dissertation mit dem Titel

Gender Agreement Patterns in Heritage Russian

um eine von mir erstmalig, selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasste Arbeit handelt.

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass ich sämtliche in der oben genannten Arbeit verwendeten fremden Quellen, auch aus dem Internet (einschließlich Tabellen, Grafiken u.Ä.) als solche kenntlich gemacht habe. Insbesondere bestätige ich, dass ich ausnahmslos sowohl bei wörtlich übernommenen Aussagen bzw. unverändert übernommenen Tabellen, Grafiken u. Ä. (Zitaten) als auch bei in eigenen Worten wiedergegebenen Aussagen bzw. von mir abgewandelten Tabellen, Grafiken u. Ä. anderer Autorinnen und Autoren (Paraphrasen) die Quelle angegeben habe.

Mir ist bewusst, dass Verstöße gegen die Grundsätze der Selbständigkeit als Täuschung betrachtet und nach §16 der Promotionsordnung der Philosophischen Fakultät II vom 27. April 2016 (Amtliches Mitteilungsblatt der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin Nr. 26/2016) entsprechend geahndet werden.

Datum: 15.01.2020

Irina Krüger